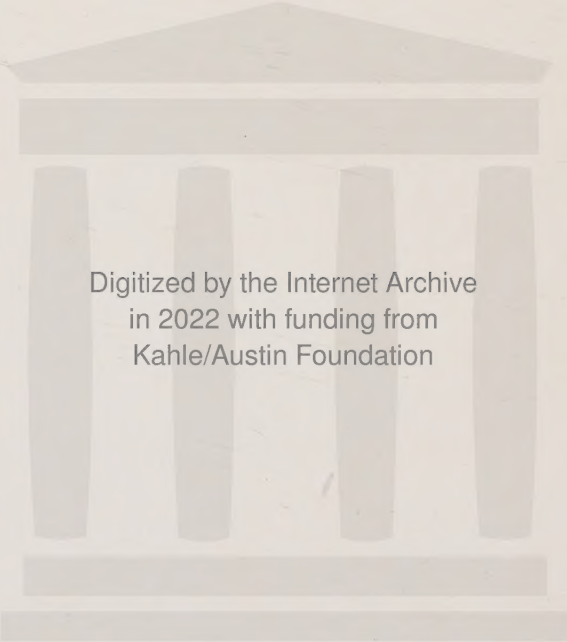




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Living Sisters
of The Little Flower



St. Therese
of the Child Jesus and of The Holy Face
"The Little Flower"

The Living Sisters of the Little Flower

BY THE
Rev. Albert H. Dolan, O. Carm.
NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF THE
SOCIETY OF THE LITTLE FLOWER

EDITED BY
Robert A. Lusk



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INTRODUCTION

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“THE LIVING SISTERS OF THE LITTLE FLOWER” is the latest addition to an already long list of Little Flower literature from the pen of the Rev. Albert H. Dolan, O. Carm., National Director of the Society of the Little Flower. Through his work and his writings the American clergy, public and press have acclaimed Father Dolan the foremost authority on the Little Flower in America today and his latest book but adds to his reputation. This little volume, which is profusely illustrated, can lay claim to the distinction of being the only book of its kind on the market. Its appeal to all lovers of Little Therese is unique, due to the fact that the author has enjoyed the singular privilege of several interviews with all the living sisters of the Little Flower and is here giving the public the benefit of his rare treat. Owing to his position as National Director of the Little Flower Society in America, doors opened to Father Dolan which invariably are barred to all who seek admittance. Each of the sisters sent a special message to the members of the Society through him and he has, besides, gained much first-hand and fully authenticated information not to be found in any book, except the present. The graphic and intensely interesting descriptions of the author’s trip to Lisieux last Spring possess a value all their own. Only one, who was able to approach his subject in a spirit of sympathetic understanding and with whom the spread of devotion to Little Therese has become a passion and a life-work, could have invested his narrative with the charm it possesses.

We feel convinced that the present booklet of Father Dolan will do much to diffuse among the many members of the fast-growing Little Flower Society the same reverent love and deep-seated devotion towards Therese of Lisieux which the author feels so keenly.

With a prayer that this volume will achieve the highest measure of success in its mission of winning friends for Carmel’s little Saint, we speed it on its way.

FR. LAWRENCE C. DIETHER, O. Carm.,
Provincial of the Carmelites.

AUTHOR'S FOREWORD



THESE little talks about those who knew St. Therese have had, when delivered, I am told, the happy effect of making the auditors feel that they themselves "almost knew St. Therese." My motive in publishing the talks is that they may have the same effect upon a wider audience, that they may bring the Little Flower close to you, dear reader, make YOU feel that you "almost knew her," and that this intimacy will in turn have a wholesome effect upon your lives, make it easier for you to pray to her and to imitate her, and cause some of the sweetness of her life to enter into yours. That the talks may indeed have this effect is my prayer.

If there is any merit in these talks about the Little Flower's sisters, it is due to the kindness of Pauline, the Little Flower's sister, now Mother Agnes, Prioress of the Lisieux Carmelite Convent. Had Mother Agnes not been so generous in giving me her time and her permission to interview the other sisters, Celine and Marie, these talks would never have been delivered nor this book published. The only recompense Mother Agnes wished was a prayer for herself and her community, and therefore that my readers may remember Pauline and her sisters in their prayers is the hope of the author.

ALBERT H. DOLAN, O. Carm.

Feast of the Canonization of St. Therese
May 17, 1926.

EDITOR'S FOREWORD

~

THIS little book, "The Living Sisters of the Little Flower," is perhaps unique in the history of literature, for it is doubtful whether another book describing visits with the sisters of a Saint has ever been written. If we add to that unique circumstance the fact that the Saint, whose sisters are herein described and quoted, is the world's most beloved Saint, we shall have an explanation of the unprecedented interest with which thousands followed these talks given by one who has had most unusual opportunities to gather first-hand information about the Little Flower.

Undoubtedly no other one man in the world today, certainly no one in America, has talked with so many who knew the Little Flower in life. And assuredly no one else has ever obtained at Lisieux so many privileges, amongst which were the rarest major relics, unique souvenir relics, such as the Little Flower's rose bush; lengthy interviews with the Saint's sisters, cousins and teachers; the loan of an original picture of the Little Flower painted by her own sister and other favors described in the book proper. No wonder that Pierre, the Carmel Sacristan, said to Father Dolan, "No one else has ever been so favored at Lisieux; the Little Flower herself must have arranged it all for you, her brother Carmelite."

The chapters of this book were originally so many talks delivered by Father Dolan at the National Shrine of the Little Flower in Chicago and the narratives have been preserved in their original form because it was thought that the narrative gains rather than loses interest and attractiveness in that vivid and animated form.

Without further preliminary the reader is invited to peruse the book itself and judge for himself whether it merits the high praise bestowed upon it in the Introduction by the Provincial of the Carmelite Order in America.

ROBERT A. LUSK,
Editor.

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THE LIVING SISTERS OF THE LITTLE FLOWER

Chapter I

Description of Lisieux, of the Little Flower's Convent and of the Personal Appearance of the Little Flower's Sisters

Since, my dear friends, you are all so eager to hear the account of my visits with the Little Flower's Sisters, I shall, without any preliminary other than to say that I am glad to be back home* and to see you all, plunge directly into the narrative of my visit to the home of the Little Flower.

As most of you know, the Little Flower, St. Therese, has four living sisters. They are: Pauline, the eldest, Marie, Celine and Leonie. The first three are Carmelite nuns living now in the same convent in which the Little Flower lived and died. Pauline's name in religion is Mother Agnes of Jesus.

*Father Dolan, upon his arrival in New York from France, rushed from the pier to the train and arrived in Chicago at the National Shrine just in time to deliver this first discourse at the opening service of the May Novena during which all these talks were given. (Editor's Note.)

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Marie's name in religion is Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart and Celine's name is Sister Genevieve of the Holy Face. Those are the three sisters of the Little Flower who are Carmelite nuns. The fourth sister, Leonie, called in religion Sister Frances, is a Visitation nun who lives in a convent at Caen, not far from Lisieux.

While in France I interviewed at length all four of these living sisters of our little saint and they sent to you messages which shall be delivered in the course of the Novena, but in order that we may proceed in an orderly manner, let us begin this afternoon by a brief description of Lisieux.

The town in which the Little Flower lived and died, Lisieux, is an old Normandy town with a history that dates back to the time of its conquest by Julius Caesar in the year 57 before Christ. It is located in the fresh and fertile valley of the Touques River, about half way between Cherbourg and Paris. The journey to Lisieux is supremely delightful. The train passes along interminable apple orchards which when I was there were in full bloom, and apple blossom time in Normandy affords views that are not soon to be forgotten. The Little Flower tells us in her autobiography

Description of Lisieux

that the wooded hillsides on each side of the valley in which Lisieux is situated afforded her many delights on her afternoon walks with her father before she shut herself up in the convent from the garden of which she could gain a view of but a tiny corner of God's sky.

Although Lisieux is charmingly situated, the town itself is not beautiful. On the contrary, Lisieux would be ugly if it were not picturesque. Its buildings are old and crumbling. Its streets are extremely narrow, so narrow that one might walk in the middle of the street and stretch out his arms and touch the buildings on each side of the street. No one but a saint, no one but a saint as attractive as the Little Flower, could have made that little old town known in all the corners of the world.

Before I went to Lisieux, I imagined that I would find the convent, in which the Little Flower lived and died, situated in the outskirts of the city, perhaps on a wooded hillside in a rural or semi-rural district. But instead, I found her convent situated in the very center of the city, quite near the station, on a little side street and although the chapel which adjoined the convent is very beautiful the convent itself

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is an old brick building, dilapidated in the extreme.

As I walked those narrow streets that first day and gazed upon that dilapidated convent the wonder of the Little Flower's story burst upon me with new force. What a marvel it was and is that anyone, **anyone**, living in that ancient convent on a side street of an obscure Normandy town should become known the world over! What a marvel it is! Thirty years ago, who, viewing that ancient convent on that side street would have imagined that a girl-nun living there would, in a few short years, attract the attention of the world and not only its attention but also the love of millions of every age and sex and race and condition in life? What a manifestation of God's power the Little Flower's story is! Queens born in palaces in the time of the Little Flower have died and even their names have been forgotten, but the name of the Little Flower shut up in that obscure Carmelite cloistered convent at the age of fifteen and dying at the tender age of 24, when most people are beginning their life work, her name by God's power has been blown to the most remote villages of the earth. What a manifestation of God's

Description of Lisieux

power! He wanted a messenger and he selected Therese of Lisieux, and behold to-day, even humanly speaking, there is no glory like unto hers—no glory equal to that of this young and humble Carmelite nun. Whose name is on so many lips to-day? What hero's portrait is so rapidly diffused and so widely multiplied as the photograph of the Little Flower? Her picture looks down from the walls of millions of homes. What would Lisieux be to-day without the Little Flower? It would be as it was before her coming, unknown and unnoticed; but since her coming and because of her, Lisieux has become a world-city. Just as we speak of Teresa of Avila and Francis of Assisi, so now we speak of Therese of Lisieux and undoubtedly all down through the ages Lisieux will be hailed as one of the holy cities of humanity.

That first day, my dear friends, as I walked those narrow streets there was one thought that returned again and again to my mind, namely: "Saint Therese once walked these streets; the Little Flower as a girl once walked these very streets." With that thought those ugly little by-ways took on beauty and charm and even glory—I was walking on holy ground, upon

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ground sanctified by the frequent presence of the Little Flower.

I sought to find a hotel at a point that would be very near to the convent of the Little Flower but I could find none near enough to suit me. However, directly across the road from the convent of the Little Flower there was a little inn which was licensed only for invalids. But before I had left America for France I had broken my ankle and I was still on crutches when I reached Lisieux. Consequently I was an invalid, disabled and I was therefore entitled to and given a room in that inn. From my room I could have tossed a coin to the roof of the cell in which the Little Flower lived.

By the way, my crutches occasioned an interesting experience. The first day I wanted, of course, to see everything in the little town and I hobbled about on crutches, attracting no particular attention as everyone who saw me thought I was like thousands of others who had come there to be cured by the relics of the Little Flower. But the time had come that night to put aside the crutches, and consequently the next morning when I appeared without crutches immediately the rumor went

Description of Lisieux

abroad that I had been cured by the Little Flower. In spite of repeated denials the rumor persisted and as I passed through the streets towards the end of the week I could hear, "There he goes!" "There he is—the American priest that was miraculously cured by the relics of the Little Flower." This mistaken supposition did not have consequences that were at all unhappy because everywhere I went, people were anxious to wait on me and do me favors and to talk to me, which was just what I wanted.

A word now about the life of the sisters in the Carmelite convent in order that my narrative may be clear, as it is unfolded, to all. The Carmelite sisters live under the most rigorous of all the rules of religious orders. Their life is one of absolute obedience and of prayer, and mortification. Their humiliations and mortifications and prayers they offer in atonement for your sins and my sins. They offer their prayers and mortifications in atonement for the sins of the world. One of their greatest mortifications is what is known as absolute cloister, that is, once they enter the convent they never again reach the street. Once the door of the convent closes upon them,

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it closes upon them forever. Carmelite sisters are never transferred from one convent to another, and never under any imaginal pretense are they allowed to leave the convent. Once they have taken their vows they never again see their friends or relatives. Their friends and relatives, if there is sufficient reason and after a long interval, may come and visit them in the parlor but they do not see the sister with whom they are visiting, nor does the sister see them. The parlor is divided into two sections, interior and exterior by a solid wall which is called a grille. In this grille there is a bamboo panel through which voices may penetrate so that, for instance, when the Little Flower's father came to visit her in the parlor he talked with her, but he did not see her, nor did she see him. They talked through the grille. No one ever sees the Carmelite sisters except under the most unusual circumstances such as, for instance, when it is necessary to call a physician or nurse in extreme cases. Although almost no one ever sees the sisters of the Little Flower, still by a strange coincidence I am able to tell you this evening just what the appearance of the three Carmelite sisters of the Little Flower is to-day. That

Description of Lisieux

extraordinary coincidence was this: You may know that when a bone is broken it is kept in a cast and after the cast has been put aside massage is necessary. While in Lisieux therefore I sought a masseur and found that the only people who gave massage in Lisieux were the nuns of the Misericorde Hospital. They are what we would call in this country "visiting nurses." So I called one of them and one Sister Agatha came and fortunately for me, Sister Agatha a few months before had nursed one of the Little Flower's sisters, Marie, through a serious illness. She had been day and night at the bedside of Marie and had seen and talked not only with Marie but many times with Pauline and Celine, the other two sisters of the Little Flower, as well. Moreover, she was most willing to answer the questions I was eager to ask her.

I said to her, "Sister, what does Pauline look like?"

Sister Agatha answered: "Pauline is very short; she is extremely thin, and dark and her most distinguished characteristic is large, luminous, black eyes." She continued, "She is so small and short and thin that no one in Lisieux ever calls her 'Mother Agnes;' they call her 'The Little

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Mother,' even as the Little Flower called Pauline, 'Ma petite mere,' 'My Little Mother,' because Pauline was indeed the second mother of the Little Flower, her own mother died when she (the Little Flower) was four years old and from then on Pauline was the mother of little Therese."

I said to Sister Agatha, "What does Celine look like?"

She answered, "Celine is not dark, but fair. She has blue eyes and even in her old age resembles the pictures that you see of the Little Flower."

"And," I said, "Marie? What does she look like?"

"Marie," said Sister Agatha, "is the stoutest and the jolliest of the three. She is dark like Pauline and has black eyes but they are not as large or as luminous as those of Pauline."

I asked her, "Which is the prettiest?"

She answered without any hesitation, "Celine, because she resembles the Little Flower."

"Which is the holiest?" I asked.

She answered again without any hesitation, "Pauline."

Description of Lisieux



The Little Flower and her Father.

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I said, "Sister, what makes you think so?"

She replied, "Because Pauline it was who formed the character of the Little Flower and therefore she must be the most holy."

So you see, my dear friends, how this chance meeting with Sister Agatha resulted in this intimate and interesting information concerning the Little Flower's sisters, information probably not obtainable from anyone in the world to-day except Sister Agatha. Tomorrow I shall tell you of my visit with the first of these sisters, Pauline.

Chapter II

First Visit With Pauline

To-day, my dear friends, I wish to speak to you of one who to me and undoubtedly to you and to all lovers of the Little Flower, is one of the most interesting persons in all this world. I speak of Pauline, Mother Agnes of Jesus, the eldest sister and the beloved second mother of Saint Therese.

One afternoon during my stay at Lisieux, after having said Mass in the morning at the tomb of the Little Flower and after having told her before the Mass, "Do what you will with this Mass, but remember, I want to talk with your sister, Pauline, to-day," I went over to the Carmelite Convent and pulled the bell cord at the street entrance. One of the sisters, the sister portress, came.

I said, "Sister, may I speak with Mother Agnes?"

The sister answered, "Mother Agnes does not come to the parlor." She pointed to a placard which read: "The pilgrims are re-

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requested not to ask to talk to the sisters of the Little Flower because they will be obliged to refuse to do so. The Little Flower will reward the pilgrims for this sacrifice of leaving her sisters to their life of prayer and solitude."

Nevertheless I said to the sister, "As a special favor would you take my card to Mother Agnes? I have received several letters from her in America and I am a director of the The Little Flower Society in America, the largest organization in the world in honor of Saint Therese. Perhaps on this account Mother Agnes will see me."

"Very well, Father," said the Sister, "I will take your card to her," and opening the door to the parlor, she asked me to have a seat.

You may imagine with what mingled feelings of trepidation and hopeful anticipation, I waited before that grille, in that bare Carmelite convent parlor. Would she come? Was I to have the privilege of speaking with the Little Flower's sister or was I to be cruelly disappointed? I was more nervous and excited by far while waiting for Pauline than I was in Rome while waiting to be introduced unto the immediate presence of the Pope. Finally, I

First Visit With Pauline

heard a door open behind the grille, but there were no footsteps, and then without any warning there came the customary greeting of the Carmelite sisters, "Deo Gratias"—Latin for "Thanks be to God."

But what a voice! So soft, so fresh, so musical, an angelic voice! But none of those adjectives give you any idea of the wonder of that heavenly voice. I knew it must be Pauline because I had read of her voice. St. Therese in her Autobiography tells us how she, The Little Flower, loved the voice of her sister Pauline and so I said, "Is it Pauline?"

Again that heavenly voice said "Oui, mon Pere, c'est Pauline" (Yes, Father, it is Pauline).

Then I became tongue tied for a moment; I passed into a temporary trance when I realized that I was in the immediate presence of the beloved sister and second mother of Saint Therese! There rushed into my mind a flood of memories, memories of her association with the Little Flower. For instance, in a flash, there came that scene at the Little Flower's mother's death bed. Around her bed were kneeling all her daughters, including the Little Flower, and when the last moment

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came and the Little Flower's mother was able no longer to speak, she took Pauline's hand and then pointed to her daughters about the bed; then she raised Pauline's hand reverently to her lips and kissed it with respect. By the gesture she meant to indicate that Pauline was now the mother of the now motherless children and the kiss signified the maternal authority with which she thereby vested Pauline.

There then before me, behind that grille, was Pauline, the mother of the Martin household throughout the girlhood of the Little Flower. There was that stern but devoted and affectionate teacher of the Little Flower who demanded perfect lessons from her every morning under the penalty of refusing her permission to take her usual walk with her father.

I recalled an incident of the Little Flower's girlhood which has always interested me and which illustrates Pauline's character. One hot summer's afternoon, Therese, returning from a long walk with her father, ran to Pauline saying, "Oh, Pauline, if you only knew how thirsty I am."

Pauline, thinking to teach the little girl a lesson in sacrifice, said, "Could you not

First Visit With Pauline

bear the thirst, Therese, and offer it up for some poor sinner?"

The Little Flower looked up with her great eyes at her sister a moment and then said "Oui, Pauline;" (Yes, Pauline) heaving at the same time a great sigh which indicated the magnitude of the sacrifice.

Pauline soon relented and brought a refreshing drink to her little sister, but the Little Flower was scandalized and refused it saying "Oh, no; take the drink and abandon the poor sinner? Oh, no."

Pauline explained that having accepted the sacrifice Therese had the merit of it and that now she must add to that merit the merit of obedience. Such was the beautiful training the Little Flower received from Pauline.

There before me was the sister who assigned the household tasks to the Little Flower. One of these duties was to answer the bell which the Little Flower delighted to do especially on Mondays when the poor of the town came to the Martin gate to ask for alms. The Little Flower would scamper across the lawn to the gate at the wall which surrounds the Martin home and then report the visitor's message to Pauline. On one occasion the Little Flower returned

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and said, "Oh, Pauline, it is a little lady with two tiny, tiny babies; what can I give them? On another occasion when she had given some alms she returned all radiant with joy and said, "Oh, Pauline, the poor man said, 'God will bless you, my little miss.' "

There before me was Pauline who prepared the Little Flower for her first Confession and to whom the Little Flower always went thereafter for counsel in her examination of conscience—if we can understand what the examination of conscience of a saint must be—the examination of conscience of one who could say just before she died, "From the age of three I never gave God aught but love."

Pauline was loved so tenderly by Therese that when Pauline left the Little Flower to become a Carmelite nun, the Little Flower was so grief stricken that she was seized with that mysterious illness of her girlhood which almost resulted in her death.

It was Pauline, who as the second mother of the Little Flower, Mother Superior of the convent, commanded St. Therese to write her Autobiography. It was to Pauline that Therese wrote most of her touch-

First Visit With Pauline

ing, affectionate and highly spiritualized letters.

Then, too, I thought in a flash, it was Pauline to whom Celine, her other sister, referred towards the end of the Little Flower's life when she (Celine) said one night, "Therese, your last loving look must not be for me, nor for Marie, but for Pauline." And it was Pauline who was with her alone that last night when a sudden change for the worse came and Pauline rang the bell summoning the sisters of the community to the bedside of the dying saint.

These were the memories that crowded into my mind as I found myself abruptly in the presence of the beloved sister of the Little Flower. No wonder I couldn't speak for a moment.

Then I found myself and said, "Mother, I can not tell you how happy I am to have the privilege of speaking with the eldest sister and second mother of St. Therese."

Again that heavenly voice, "I am pleased, Father, that you are pleased, because I have heard that you have done much in America to promote devotion to the Little Flower."

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The Little Flower and her Mother.

First Visit With Pauline

"Yes, perhaps," I said, "Mother, but this visit more than repays anything I have done or will do."

"You know, Father, as an individual priest I could not come to talk to you. Our rule, as you know, forbids all unnecessary conversation but I have come to you because you are the director of the Society in honor of the Little Flower of which I have heard so much." Then she proceeded to ask many questions concerning the Society in America—What was its membership? She asked me questions concerning the Shrine in Chicago, the National Headquarters of the Society of the Little Flower and she asked for a photograph of the overflowing crowds at the Shrine on Tuesdays. I promised to send her the photograph, which, by the way, I have done.

Then there followed some conversation which is relatively unimportant and then I asked her permission to ask some questions. She assented and I asked, "Mother, during the lifetime of the Little Flower, did the sisters of her community look upon her as a saint?"

She answered, "No, Father, they looked upon her as a perfect religious but I do

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not think that they regarded her as a future canonized saint."

"But, Mother," I asked, "did they not notice anything extraordinary about her?"

"Oh, yes," she said, "they knew that she was no ordinary sister; she was so infinitely sweet and gentle that they all knew she was perfect in the practice of all virtues."

"But you, Mother," I said, "you, who were her second mother, who were the recipient of all her confidences, did you not know that God had marked her for a special mission?"

"Yes, Father, I knew; I knew all along that my little sister was no ordinary perfect religious; I knew all along that God had conferred upon my little sister His rarest and choicest graces, and especially toward the end when she began to utter her prophecies—"My work will begin after my death"—"I will spend my heaven in doing good upon earth"—"I shall let fall from heaven a shower of roses"—then I knew that her words had been inspired from on high and from then on no words escaped her lips but that I made a careful record of them in writing. I knew it then but I know it now more clearly than then that God had

First Visit With Pauline

marked her for a special mission to the modern world."

The time is up now and I have not yet completed that narrative nor have I delivered the message Pauline sent, one to the men and one to the women. Those messages I will deliver tomorrow when we will complete this unfinished narrative of my interview with the sister of the Little Flower.

Chapter III

First Visit With Pauline (Continued)

We were forced to stop yesterday before I had completed my story of my interview with Pauline, the second mother and eldest sister of the Little Flower. In order that you might appreciate the thrill of the interview, I tried yesterday to explain how close and intimate was the union between Therese and Pauline, but to-day we may add by way of preliminary a few more facts which will serve to illustrate their intimacy.

No one understood the Little Flower as well as Pauline. No one, not even her father, I think, contributed so much to the formation of the Little Flower's character. To realize this, just consider that the Little Flower's mother died when Therese was four years old and from that time on Pauline was more than a mother to St. Therese, more than a mother because for several years the Little Flower was too frail to be sent out to school and during that time Pauline was her only teacher. Then later in the Carmelite Convent, Pauline was the

First Visit With Pauline—Cont.

Little Flower's Mother Superior and therefore, the Religious Mother of the Little Flower also, and it was to Pauline, as her Religious Superior, that the Little Flower first confided her promises:—"I will spend my heaven in doing good upon earth. . . . After my death I will let fall a shower of roses." Pauline knew the Little Flower so well that when at nine years of age the Little Flower expressed a desire eventually to enter a convent, Pauline knew that it was no passing childish fancy but a real vocation, and therefore she encouraged the Little Flower, altho another sister, Marie, tried to discourage Therese. It was Pauline, too, who did not a little to remove the obstacles in the way of the Little Flower's entrance to the convent at the age of fifteen.

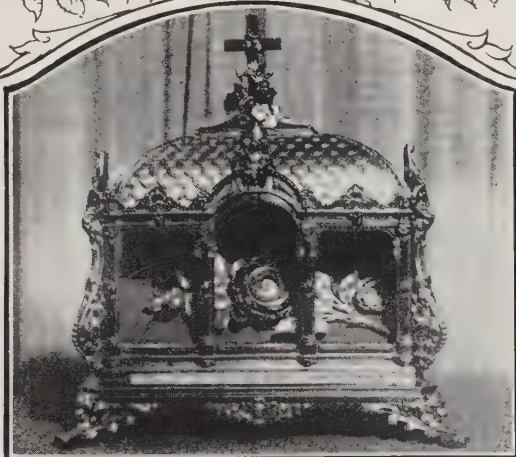
Then here is another fact that will illustrate the tenderness of the Little Flower's attachment to Pauline. After Pauline had left for the Carmelite Convent, the Little Flower as a consequence had fallen seriously ill, and while she was still confined to her bed, the day on which Pauline would take the veil was approaching. That day would ordinarily be a joyous day for the entire Martin family because on that day,

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since the vows had not been taken, relatives could not only talk with but actually see for the last time the sisters who were taking the veil. The family of the Little Flower carefully refrained from speaking of the coming event in the hearing of the Little Flower because they feared to aggravate her illness by exciting regrets that she could not seize this last opportunity of seeing Pauline. But the Little Flower needed no reminder, she surprised the entire family one day by declaring from her sick bed that they would be able to attend the ceremony and as a matter of fact she was able to go and she tells us in her own words, "When the glorious day came I was able to leave my bed and to go to the Convent where, after the ceremony, once again I had the happiness of embracing Pauline, my Little Mother, of sitting on her knee and receiving her caresses and hiding my little head beneath her new white veil."

Let us continue then, my dear friends, the account of my conversation with the beloved sister of St. Therese. We stopped yesterday at Pauline's answer to my question, "Did the sisters or did you recognize the Little Flower during her life time as a saint?"

First Visit With Pauline—Cont.



Upper—The Precious Relics at the National Shrine of the Little Flower.
Lower—Chasse in which the Relics are kept at the National Shrine.

(See text page 182)

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Next I asked her whether there was anyone who saw in the Little Flower as a girl such signs of sanctity that would lead him to guess that she might one day be a saint.

She answered, "Well, Father, you know that the very nature of her little way would preclude anything that would be very ostentatious but, nevertheless, there were some people who guessed and declared her sanctity," and then she told me the following anecdotes:

One day in the Little Flower's girlhood a pious old lady who had observed the Little Flower closely in church with Pauline and who had seen, during the procession, the Little Flower's great eyes in ecstasy in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament said to Pauline as they left the church, "That little sister of yours is an angel. I will be very much surprised if she stays long on this earth, but if she lives, mark my words, you will see that she will be spoken of some day as a saint."

Another time in the Little Flower's girlhood an old laborer who came to work at the Little Flower's home insisted when he was leaving that Pauline give him a lock of the Little Flower's hair, which he said he

would hold precious for it would one day be the relic of a saint.

“Often,” Pauline said, “when I was on the streets of the town with Little Therese, the passers-by would turn fascinated to look long at the Little Flower, not so much because of her physical beauty but because of the celestial charm that seemed to radiate from her person.”

Pauline said too that the doctor who attended the Little Flower towards the end of her life said one day to Pauline, “Oh, you do not know how much she suffers; never in all my experience have I seen anyone suffer so much or with such expression of supernatural joy.” Then he added positively, “C’est un ange”—“she is an angel.”

The Chaplain, Pauline said, who came to hear the Little Flower’s last confession was tremendously impressed to see her so beautiful and even transfigured in the midst of her excruciating pains. He looked upon her with the greatest reverence and later declared that he entered the infirmary as if it were a sanctuary, and he said to Pauline as he left, “Quel ange! (What an angel!) She is absolutely confirmed in the grace of God.”

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These then are some of the recognitions of the Little Flower's sanctity from those who knew her when she was alive.

Then I asked Mother Agnes to settle a much disputed question, namely: the question of the color of the Little Flower's eyes.

"Her eyes," said Pauline, "were not exactly blue but bluish." She used a French word which signifies a color between green and blue, although she said that those who did not observe closely thought her eyes were blue. "She was tall," Pauline said, "her hair was blond, her complexion lily-like. She had a small mouth and fine regular features and she walked with a certain dignity which was at once simple and majestic. But," she said, "the most remarkable feature of her appearance was a certain expression on her countenance, an expression of charm and serenity and heavenly peace, which impressed all even from her girlhood." By the way, all the others with whom I talked who had known the Little Flower as a girl spoke of this charming, peaceful expression.

Then I asked Pauline for a message to the members of the Little Flower Society. She thought a while, then asked, "Would

First Visit With Pauline—Cont.

they really be interested in a message from me?"

I said, "Of course they would be, Mother; they would be tremendously interested."

"I do not know what to say," she answered, "could you tell them that I will pray especially for them."

I said, "No, Mother, they already know that you Carmelite sisters pray for all the world."

"But I will pray particularly for them, the members of the Society."

"But could you not send them some more personal message, something that will be less general and more concrete, some spiritual counsel or advice?"

Then there was a pause and then she said and I was careful to write each word, "Tell the ladies of the Little Flower Society of America that if they would please the Little Flower and win her favor, they must not follow the fashion when the fashion demands immodest or indecent dress."

I thanked Mother Agnes and then said to her, "That is a message, Mother, for only part of the Society because a large proportion of the Little Flower Society consists of men. Would you send a message also to men?"

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That amused her. "I," she said, "a cloistered nun, send a message to the men?" Then she laughed. It was a laugh such as I imagine the Little Flower's must have been—soft and musical and whole-hearted, although restrained. The Little Flower would probably have been similarly amused if during her lifetime she had been asked to send a message to the men of distant America.

But I was quite insistent and so after a long pause there came Pauline's message to the men. "Tell the men of the Society of the Little Flower that if they would please St. Therese and win her favor, they must hold themselves aloof from all that is low and base and ignoble and go to Holy Communion frequently."

I left the Carmelite Convent that afternoon walking on air, for I had talked nearly an hour with the beloved sister of the Little Flower. Later on I had a second interview with her during which she gave me the precious relics of which you have all heard. Tomorrow I will tell you of that interview and of how I persuaded her to let me talk also with the other two sisters of St. Therese, Marie and Celine.

Chapter IV

The Second Visit With Pauline

Last night, my dear friends, I completed the story of my first visit with the sister of the Little Flower, Pauline.

For many reasons I wanted a second interview with her and I wanted, of course, also to talk with her other two Carmelite sisters, Marie and Celine, who, you remember, are Sisters in the same convent in which the Little Flower lived. I knew that that would be very difficult and consequently I planned a little strategy.

After my visit with Pauline I waited ten days in Lisieux and in that time I made three powerful friends. One was the Sisters' Chaplain. The second was the famous Pierre, the guardian of the Little Flower's tomb. He had been miraculously cured years ago, by the intercession of the Little Flower, of an illness that was thought to be incurable and he has since been the guardian of her tomb. No one is closer to the Little Flower's sisters than Pierre since he performs all their errands for them and

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has absolute charge of the chapel and of the tomb. The third friend was one Mademoiselle Violette, the guardian of the Little Flower's home, the home in which she lived throughout her girlhood. Mademoiselle Violette is a sister of one of the Little Flower's novices, Sister Mary of the Trinity, who is still living in the Carmel of Lisieux. I couldn't have chosen more powerful friends, and I needed them in order to obtain what I wanted from Pauline.

When after the ten days I judged the time to be opportune, I wrote a letter to Mother Agnes, Pauline, asking three favors. The first was this: I asked her to give not to me personally but to the American National Shrine in Chicago, to be the property of the Society of the Little Flower, the rarest of all Little Flower relics, namely, a portion of her flesh.*

I knew that there were three such relics and that all of them were at Lisieux, and I asked her in the letter if it were really necessary for all three to remain there, and if one could not come to America to inspire

*The Little Flower's body, as she prophesied, was reduced to dust with this exception, that when her body was exhumed, a very small portion of her flesh was found clinging to her habit. It is about this rare relic that Father Dolan speaks here. [Editor's Note.]

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devotion similar to that which one witnesses at her tomb.

Secondly, I asked her to loan to the Society of the Little Flower, for the Eucharistic Congress, the picture of the Little Flower painted by her own sister, Celine, the picture to be exhibited throughout the Congress at the National Shrine in Chicago.

Thirdly, I asked her to give permission to Marie and Celine to come to the parlor so that I might visit with them. I told her that I knew I was asking a great deal, but that I was emboldened by the thought that I was not asking for myself but for the lovers of the Little Flower in America, in order that their devotion to her might be intensified by the relics and painting and by the accounts of the talks with her own sisters.

I told her that when I said Mass that morning at the Little Flower's tomb, I asked the Little Flower to inspire Pauline to grant to me all three of these favors, and that I would await her reply with the greatest anxiety at the little inn across the street from the convent, the little inn at which I was staying.

Before sending the letter, I mobilized my three friends, the Sisters' Chaplain, Pierre,

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Father Dolan entering the Carmelite Convent for his second interview with Pauline.

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and Mademoiselle Violette, and asked them all to go to the convent and in some way get word to Mother Agnes, Pauline, asking her as a favor to them to grant the requests which would be contained in a letter she would receive that morning.

After they had all been to the parlor, I said to Pierre, "Pierre, will you take this letter and see that it reaches Pauline immediately?"

Pierre agreed readily, and he was as anxious about the result as I was.

The letter was delivered to Mother Agnes about 10 o'clock one Tuesday morning. You may imagine with what anxiety and suspense I awaited the answer. I waited for more than two hours—two of the longest hours I ever spent. I had played my last card—there was nothing else to be done. Would I succeed or would I fail?

I waited at the window of the little inn across the street from the convent, because I knew that Pauline's answer would be delivered by the Sister Portress, and from the window I could see the Sister Portress if she left the convent on any errand. She did leave the convent two or three times, but did not come in my direction. Finally, about 12:15 or 12:30 o'clock, the landlady

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insisted that I go downstairs and eat. I was scarcely seated in the dining room when the Sister Portress entered the inn looking for "Pere Dolan, the American Carmelite Priest." She did not have to look long, for I saw her first, and was at her side in a jiffy.

She said, "Voulez-vous, mon Pere, venir au parloir a une heure parler avec Mere Agnes?" which means, "Would Father please come to the parlor at 1 o'clock to speak with Mother Agnes?"

Would I? I certainly would, I told her, although I regretted I could not say in French, "I hope to tell you I will."

I made for the door with the Sister, but she said, "You need not come now, Father, you have nearly half an hour."

I replied, "I know it, Sister, but I am going to the tomb of the Little Flower first, to ask the intercession of the Little Flower, that Pauline may grant the requests I have asked. You may tell Mother Agnes that, if you wish; tell her that I have gone to the tomb to speak to the Little Flower before I go to speak with her."

At the appointed hour, I again pulled the bell cord at the street entrance, and this time without any question or delay I was

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admitted to the parlor before the grille, and after a short delay I again heard the door open and again the celestial voice of Pauline, saying, "Deo Gratias"—"Thanks be to God."

"I echoed sincerely, 'Thanks be to God.'"

Without any preliminary, she said, "Father, I have received your letter, and here is the relic," and she turned the little revolving door in the grille. When it had been turned, I found on it a box, in which was the relic of the Little Flower, a portion of her flesh, which I had hardly dared to hope to obtain. It was enclosed in a magnificent reliquary made by Pauline's own hands. I then noticed there was a second relic—several generous locks of the Little Flower's hair.

Thinking that there was a mistake, I said, "Mother, there are two relics here."

Pauline answered, "Yes, you said in your letter you were not asking for anything for yourself, so the relic of the flesh is for the shrine, and the locks of hair are for you."

Of course I could not thank her. I was not able—but I am sure she understood.

I told her that I would not keep it for myself but would place it in the reliquary

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with the other relics, which I did later on, and it is with those relics you have been blessed each evening.

She then said that she would be glad to lend us the painting; so the second request was granted, but she made no mention of the third request and talked as if the interview were closed. Of course, I was greatly disturbed. I did not want to mention the request after having written it, and I temporized, but to no avail.

Finally I had to say, "Mother, you have not mentioned the third request."

"You mean about speaking with Marie and Celine?"

"Yes, Mother," I answered.

"But that is not necessary, Father," she replied, "and, besides, you have been so greatly favored already."

"I know, Mother," I said, "and I do not want you to think I am ungrateful, but I cannot return to America without having interviewed Marie and Celine when I came especially to gather first hand information."

"I myself can give you all the information you want concerning Marie and Celine," countered Pauline; "and, besides, they are very busy, and then, as you know,

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the Carmelite rule forbids me to give them permission to come to the parlor except on urgent business."

"This is urgent, is it not, Mother?" I asked, "when one comes all the way from America expressly to speak with them." I argued that if they were to come to the parlor for only a short time, it would not materially interfere with their work or with their recollection.

I continued, "I asked that third request in the Little Flower's name, and I do not think you will refuse anything asked in her name. If it is not convenient for you to permit me to interview them this afternoon, then please let them come tomorrow afternoon or later."

"When are you going to leave Lisieux?" Pauline asked.

"That, Mother, depends on you," I answered. "I cannot leave until I have spoken with Marie and Celine."

She laughed and said, "Suppose I refuse?"

"Well, then, Mother," I said, "I will come back again in a few days and ask again, on the chance that you may have relented."

"Suppose I refuse again?" she said.

"Well, I understand, Mother, that the

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Bishop of the Diocese has the power to grant such permission, and I have a letter granting me an audience with him on Friday. If you refuse me, I shall have to go to him, but I am sure you will give in before that."

"You are certainly very persevering, Father," she said.

"Yes," I said, "but so was the Little Flower. You remember, Mother, that she broke all the rules of the Vatican when she spoke to the Holy Father about her vocation during a public audience. You remember that on another occasion when with Marie she was walking the streets of Lisieux and she wanted to go to Holy Communion before the age established, she saw the Bishop and wanted to speak to him then and there on the street about advancing the date of her first Holy Communion. Perseverance, then, is not such a bad trait, is it?"

She laughed and said, "What time is it, Father?"

I looked at my watch and answered, "Ten minutes after two."

"Wait a moment," she said, and was gone.

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In an incredibly short time the door behind the grille again opened and I heard Pauline's voice saying, "Here, Father, is Marie, and here is Celine."*

Of that interview with Marie and Celine I shall have to tell you tomorrow evening.

*Father Dolan's plan of concluding his talks at a climax, resulted at the end of this talk in very audible sighs of disappointment from the throng in the church. They had been spellbound during the narrative and he himself could not repress a smile as he left the pulpit and heard the disappointed sighs of his audience at his abrupt conclusion. The story he told was by many called "a serial." He himself disclaims any merit for the intense interest displayed and explains that it was their love of the Little Flower that caused such unprecedented interest in these talks about the Saint's sisters. [Editor's Note.]

Chapter V

The Visits With Marie and Celine

Yesterday, my dear friends, we were speaking of my second visit with Pauline, Mother Agnes of Jesus, the sister of the Little Flower, and we had come to that point at which Pauline brought the other two sisters of the Little Flower to the grille, saying, "Here, Father, is Marie—and here is Celine."

In order that you may understand and appreciate, my dear friends, the solemnity of that moment, consider that scene in the Carmelite convent parlor before the grille. On one side of the grille, one who had been reading and preaching about the Little Flower for years; and on the other side, three of the sisters of that saint. Except at Lisieux one could not enjoy a similar experience the world over to-day and it will probably be centuries before it will be possible to speak with one, to say nothing of three, sisters of a canonized saint, because ordinarily the process of canonization is so

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The original painting of the Little Flower by her sister Celine. This painting is now on exhibition at the National Shrine of the Little Flower, Chicago.

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slow that the relatives of a saint are dead long before the saint is canonized.

In order to enter into my feelings at that moment, consider the intimacy of the union between St. Therese and these three sisters of the Little Flower. Their father in referring to or speaking to his daughters always used the following titles: Marie he always referred to as "Marie, my diamond;" Leonie was always "My good Leonie;" Celine, "My intrepid one;" Pauline, "My precious pearl;" and Therese, "My little queen." And there before me, at one time, were three of the five daughters of this magnificent Christian man!

Although I had prepared carefully what I would say to them, I did not for the moment know how to begin because again a throng of memories of their associations with the Little Flower rushed through my mind.

There before me was Marie to whom the Little Flower said one Christmas eve before the midnight Mass, at a time when the Little Flower was too young to receive Holy Communion, "Marie, if you will only help me, I have a plan by which I, too, tonight may receive the Little Jesus: If you will only take me with you to the midnight

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Mass and let me kneel at your side, I would hide close to you at the Communion rail and I am so tiny that no one will notice me," and her face shone with eager desire as she unfolded her plan, and then her eyes saddened as her sister explained that her desire could not then be realized.

There before me was Marie, who has been a witness to the transfiguration of the countenance of the Little Flower when, in her girlhood during a serious illness, the statue of the Blessed Virgin became animated and smiled upon the Little Flower, curing her instantly when all thought that she was dying. It was Marie who, too, during the last illness of the Little Flower saw her bestow such a look of love upon that same statue that, remembering the former miracle, Marie said, "Therese, what do you see?" And Therese said, "Never has the statue of our Lady seemed so lovely, but to-day, Marie, it is the **statue**, whereas the other time, as you know well, it was not the statue, but our Blessed Lady herself who smiled on me. It was to Marie that the Little Flower addressed that letter which contains one of the most beautiful passages ever written concerning our Blessed Mother. These are the words of

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that letter, "Often, Marie, I say to our Blessed Mother, 'Sometimes, oh cherished Mother, I think that I am more fortunate than you, because I have you for Mother, and you have, not like me, the Blessed Virgin to love.'" Was there ever love of our Blessed Lady more beautifully expressed, except it might be in that other passage of the Little Flower's writings in which she says, addressing her words to the Blessed Virgin, "If I were Queen of Heaven and thou, Therese, I would still wish to be Therese in order that I might see Thee Queen of Heaven."

And then besides Marie, there before me was Celine, Celine, whom the Little Flower called "The little companion of my infancy, the sweet echo of my soul." Celine it was who throughout the Little Flower's girlhood roomed with Saint Therese in a little room off the larger bedroom occupied by their older sisters, Marie and Pauline. It was in this larger room on Marie's bureau that the Little Flower erected her little shrine to Mary. It was with Celine that Therese spent all her holidays playing in the garden their religious games, playing at Mass and at Benediction. When the family moved from Alencon to Lisieux Marie

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wrote to one of her friends in Alencon, "We are finally settled in Lisieux in a home charmingly situated with a large garden wherein Celine and Therese can play their games."

Their games, however, were not always religious in character because both the Little Flower and Celine were, of course, human. One day, for instance, the Little Flower, tiring of playing with her dolls, gave all her dolls to Celine, who arranged the dolls in a row on the lawn in the garden and then played at school, with Celine as the teacher, the dolls as pupils, and the Little Flower as an interested spectator. The Little Flower greeted the instructions of her sister with great delight, laughing heartily at her sister as she gave the dolls lessons in geography and spelling, but she laughed heartiest when at the end Celine said, "I am going to reward the highest pupil," and selecting one doll she embraced it saying, "Now, little one, as your reward you may kiss your teacher."

It was Celine who was the companion of the Little Flower during the well known pilgrimage to Rome. The little girls, Celine and Therese, were the most daring members of the pilgrimage. What they wanted

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to do, they did, regardless of rules and regulations. For instance, at Rome in the Coliseum they wished to stand at the very spot on the which the early Christian martyrs had died. The spot was surrounded by a barricade, because excavations were being made there at that time. But the Little Flower observed that she and Celine were tiny enough to slip under the barricade, and said to Celine, "Come, follow me." The two little girls then slipped under the barricade and disregarding the warnings of the guard calling loudly to them to return, they scrambled over the ruins to the spot they sought and kneeling they pressed their lips to the dust once reddened by the blood of the early martyrs. Therese said afterwards, "Papa did not have the heart to scold us. I could even see that he was proud of the daring that we had displayed."

Here, then, before me was this companion of the Little Flower's infancy, Celine, and just as she had been the roommate of Therese in their girlhood, so during the Little Flower's last illness Celine had the consolation of being given a room just off the Infirmary and of being appointed assistant infirmarian. That room she never left except to attend services at the Chapel

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at which time Pauline, the other sister of the Little Flower, relieved her. It was Celine who was always on the alert, when the fever was at its height, to place a morsel of refreshing ice upon the lips of the Little Flower. For that service, Celine was rewarded by one of the last loving looks of Saint Therese and by one of her last celestial smiles.

These, then, were the thoughts that passed in a flash through my mind as I was abruptly introduced into the presence of all three of the sisters of our little saint and I didn't know whether to talk first with Celine or with Marie. In my excitement I said, "Celine, will you please say something?"

Celine, who was the most timid of the three, evidently did not know where to begin, either, because there was a momentary pause and I heard some one prompt her in a whisper behind the grille and then came Celine's voice, not as remarkable as Pauline's but still an unusually beautiful voice, saying, "Our Mother tells us, Father, that your work in America is to promote devotion to the Little Flower."

I said, "Yes, Sister, that is my work."

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“What a beautiful mission! Be sure, Father, that we will all pray for the success of your work and for the members of the Little Flower Society.”

I thanked her and said, “I want to tell you how very happy I am to have the privilege of speaking with the Little Flower’s sister whom she called ‘The little companion of her infancy, the sweet echo of her soul.’” As soon as I said this, I heard confusedly surprised comment on the part of all three behind the grille that one coming from distant America should be familiar with those favorite names of the Little Flower for Celine.

Then thinking that I should not neglect Marie, and knowing that I could again turn to Celine, I said something that is awkward enough in English and worse in French, “Now, may I hear Marie’s voice; where is Marie?”

“Here I am, Father,” said Marie, who was the jolliest of the three and of whose good nature I will give you some examples later on.

I said, “Your Mother Superior is very kind, Sister, to allow me to talk with you both.”

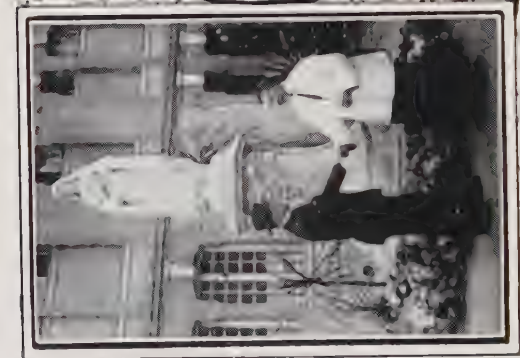
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"Oh, she is always kind," said Marie, whose voice is quite ordinary. "She is always kind and besides," she said, "we are glad to be united because we are not often together like this because we must imitate the example of the Little Flower and bestow ourselves during recreation upon the other Sisters of the community rather than upon each other. Besides you will be able to do your work better now, will you not, now that you have spoken to the sisters of the Little Flower?"

"I certainly will, Sister," I answered, "for I can imagine nothing so inspiring as these interviews with the sisters of a saint."

Then followed some talk of relative unimportance and then I asked their permission to ask some questions. For instance, I asked Celine concerning an incident which has always interested me. It occurred at the time of the Roman pilgrimage. On the train in the compartment with Celine and Therese and their father, there was an old fellow who marred the joy of the journey by constantly complaining, and finding fault and making disparaging remarks about the scenery about which the girls were so enthusiastic. He kept up his grumbling so long that finally the Little Flower

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Father Dolan, alone, (center) and with Pierre (left) and with L'Abbe Germain, the Sisters' Chaplain. (Right) In the inner court of Carmel.

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declared roundly, "Why in the world didn't he stay home?"

I asked Celine whether the old fellow overheard this remark of Saint Therese.

She was shocked that I would think for a moment that he did. "Oh, no," Celine answered, "Therese was most careful that he should not overhear. She whispered that remark to me." Celine added that a few moments after making the remark the Little Flower said to Celine, "What an interesting study this world is, when one is about to leave the world!"

Then I asked Marie concerning an incident which happened on the last night that the Little Flower lived. The story had been told to me by Sister Agatha and I wished to verify it. The story was that Marie had been with the Little Flower all during that last night and about midnight Marie gave to the Little Flower a glass of water which Therese was able merely to sip, very slowly, on account of her extreme weakness. In the meantime Marie, fatigued by many nights of watching, fell asleep and the Little Flower, rather than disturb her sister, held the glass, in spite of her weakness, for several hours.

So I said to Marie, "Is it true that you

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fell asleep that last night?" She didn't understand and I was asked to explain further, and as I unfolded the story, there was a sudden chorus of "oui's" from the other side of the grille, "yes, yes, yes, it was true, the Little Flower was so thoughtful of others even to the end that she did hold the glass for several hours in spite of her weakness in order not to disturb Celine."

"But, Father," said Marie, "how did you know that story? I do not remember telling it to anyone."

"You must have told someone, Sister," I answered, "because I have heard it," and I left the mystery unsolved because I did not wish to betray the confidence of Sister Agatha.

Then I asked if they would send a message to the members of the Little Flower Society and to all lovers of the Little Flower in America.

At this request I heard Pauline say to her sisters, "Now you'll have to put on your thinking caps. Now it is your turn; I had my turn the other day."

There was quite a long pause and then came the message of Celine. Celine said, "Tell the members of the Little Flower So-

The Visits With Marie and Celine

ciety in America that they should not only admire but also imitate the Little Flower."

My dear friends, there is great danger in merely admiring the Little Flower, in seeing in her only what is sentimental and attractive and not seeing what is solid and spiritual. There is great danger in seeing only her roses and not her cross. You will notice, for instance, that the statues of the Little Flower represent the Little Flower indeed carrying roses, but we should also notice the cross beneath the roses; the symbolism being that she bore her cross so resignedly, so cheerfully that it was for her a cross of roses, the roses being the smiles with which she greeted the trials that God sent her. That is in part what Celine meant in saying "Tell them not only to admire but also to imitate the Little Flower." We must imitate her in her patience, in her resignation to the will of God in the most severe sufferings and trials.

Then came Marie's message which was exactly what we would expect from one who had witnessed the transfiguration of the countenance of the Little Flower by the smile of the Blessed Virgin. "Tell the members of the Little Flower Society in America, Father," said Marie, "that they

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never need fear losing their souls if they imitate Saint Therese in her love of our Blessed Mother.”

Then I told the Sisters that I had a little picture with me which was my favorite picture of Saint Therese and asked if they would write a little message on it and sign their names to it so that I might have it as a souvenir of my visit with her sisters. They agreed; so I placed the picture in the little revolving door of the grille and when it reached the other side, I heard one of the Sisters, I do not know which one, I think it was Marie, say, “Oh, it is my favorite picture, too.”

Just then the bell rang out from the chapel summoning the Sisters to vespers. Pauline explained that they could not write me the message then but would write and sign it later and send it to the inn where I was staying, which they did do, and those signatures of the Little Flower’s sisters* may now be seen in a little glass case at the Shrine.

The Sisters then said farewell and then, to my great embarrassment, they knelt and

* A reproduction of this picture of the Little Flower signed by all her sisters is given as a premium to all who become promoters in the Society of the Little Flower.

The Visits With Marie and Celine

asked my blessing. My blessing! I felt like a hypocrite in giving it, when it should rather be I who should kneel for their blessing.

Then as I rose to leave the parlor, there came Pauline's memorable last words, "Be assured, Father, that we will pray for the members of the Little Flower Society and for your work." And then she added beautifully, "And I myself shall daily ask my little sainted sister to have you always under her sweet protection." Certainly if she had been asked beforehand, she could not have chosen more inspiring words with which to terminate these thrilling interviews with the sisters of Saint Therese.

I shall tell you tomorrow evening of my visit with Leonie, the fourth sister of the Little Flower, who is a Visitation nun in a convent not far from Lisieux.

Chapter VI

The Visit With Leonie

I have told you, my dear friends, almost all that transpired during my two interviews with Pauline and Marie and Celine, the three Carmelite sisters of the Little Flower. Having talked with three of her sisters I resolved to try also to talk with the fourth, Leonie, who is a Visitation nun in a convent at Caen, which is about a three hours' journey from Lisieux. Accordingly, we set out one morning in a so-called French automobile, bumping and rattling over the ruts of the French dirt roads to Caen. We did not notice the discomforts, however, because the ride was through the rolling country of beautiful upper Normandy with superb vistas at every turn of the road.

Arriving at Caen I immediately set out to find the Visitation Convent. No one seemed to know the location of the convent until finally two French priests approached and I asked them to be directed to the Visitation Convent. One of them said, "Why,

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The picture of the Little Flower as a First Communicant signed by all four of the living Sisters of the Little Flower. The first signature is that of Pauline, the second of Marie, the third of Celine and the fourth of Leonie.

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it is right here, Father, and we are going there ourselves to see the Mother Superior on business."

"What good fortune," I thought,, "I can perhaps persuade these priests to take me with them and if they will do so, since they have business with the Mother Superior, I will be certain then to see the Mother Superior and will be able to present my request." I am sure that I would not have been admitted into the presence of the Mother Superior had I not met these French priests. To see a Sister it is necessary to get the permission of the Mother Superior, and if there is anything difficult it is to see the Mother Superior of a French convent, especially when one is not known, and I was not known at all at Caen as I had been at Lisieux.

I explained to the French priests that I was an American priest who had come to Caen solely to see the sister of the Little Flower, Leonie, and I asked them to take me with them to the parlor without announcing me so that after they had finished their business, I might present my request to the Mother Superior. At first they protested that that wasn't the correct or regular thing to do and that by so doing they

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might incur the displeasure of the Mother Superior. But finally they consented and we rang the bell and the Sister portress answered. The French priests were evidently well known because we were admitted to the parlor without any question.

The Visitation rule is not as strict as the Carmelite rule nor is their cloister so absolute. The parlor in the Visitation Convent differs from the Carmelite Convent parlor in this, that although there is a grille, the grille is not a solid wall as it is in the Carmelite Convent; but is composed of a series of iron bars heavily curtained. When a Sister comes to the parlor that curtain may be and is pulled back, so that one can see the Sister with whom he is talking. That arrangement of course pleased me because I knew then that if Leonie came to the parlor I could not only talk with her but also see her.

After we had waited some few minutes, the curtain was pulled back and there was the Mother Superior. The French priests transacted their business, introduced me and left.

I immediately asked the Mother Superior to see Leonie. She explained that that was "impossible." But I had become accus-

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tomed to the word "impossible" by this time and was not greatly disturbed.

I showed her the picture I had on which was the message signed by Marie and Celine and Pauline and argued that it would be incomplete without the signature of Leonie, the fourth sister.

She agreed that it would be incomplete but proposed this plan: "I will take the picture up to Leonie and have her sign it and then I will bring it down to you again."

I said, "But, Mother, that will never do; I want to talk with her myself."

"Impossible," she declared, "Leonie is the busiest of all the Sisters and besides, as you know, I could not permit her to come to the parlor except on urgent business."

"But, Mother," I pleaded, "couldn't an exception be made in favor of one who has come to this town exclusively to see Leonie?"

She asked, "Haven't you seen the Cathedral?" (The Cathedral is the ordinary magnet which brings people to Caen, as it is one of the architectural gems of France.)

"No, Mother," I answered, "I haven't seen the Cathedral and do not intend to see it; I came here solely to see Leonie."

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Then she asked, "When are you going to leave Caen?"

My reply to a similar question to Pauline had worked so well that I thought I would try it again and answered, "I don't know, Mother; that depends on you—I must see Leonie before I go."

That didn't amuse her at all, as it did Pauline. She failed to smile and maintained still that it was impossible for me to see Leonie. I pleaded but to no avail and I was afraid for a while that I was going to lose out. However, she couldn't put me out. The only way of getting rid of me was to leave, and she was too polite to leave, and I was impolite enough to stay. Finally I actually begged. I told her that I would get down on my knees, if necessary, in order to speak with Leonie for three minutes.

At this plea she began to thaw and said, "We are not as stingy as that. If she comes to the parlor you may talk with her as long as you wish. Just wait and I'll see," and she left the parlor.

In a few moments an old Sister, not well preserved either, entered the parlor. It never occurred to me that it might be Leonie, but I inquired her name and to my great surprise, I found it was Leonie. We

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are inclined to think of the Little Flower's sisters as being of the same age as she was when she died, twenty-four, but they were all older than she and she has been dead for twenty-nine years. Leonie is 61 years of age now. She is thin and short and her face is utterly unattractive, not at all distinguished at least when it is in repose. Worse than that, she has lost most of her teeth. I was so disagreeably surprised at this defect that when I returned to Lisieux I said to Sister Agatha, "Tell me, Sister, have Marie and Pauline and Celine all their teeth?" She assured me that they have and to detect a flaw in their personal appearance it would be necessary to use a microscope. The personal appearance of Leonie would be utterly unattractive were it not for three redeeming qualities — bright, black eyes full of kindness and amiability, a most attractive and pleasing smile, and a most courteous and charming manner. It was easy to understand why the Little Flower's father always called Leonie "My good Leonie." She was goodness and kindness itself, and throughout the interview there was always that willing readiness to do everything she was asked.

I explained my work in America and she was most interested and asked many ques-

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tions about the Little Flower Society. She asked its age and its membership and she was very pleased when I told her that although the Society was only 18 months old it had nearly 200,000 members in every part of the United States and Canada. She was very much interested in the account I gave of the services at the American National Shrine in Chicago every Tuesday throughout the year, seven services each Tuesday afternoon and evening for the benefit of the crowds that wait their turn outside the Church in any and all weather in order to attend the devotions of the perpetual novena of Tuesdays.

Leonie was highly pleased with the design of our reliquary which I showed her, the reliquary being in the form of a golden rose branch, each rose of which contains one of the five major relics of the Little Flower. I asked her if she would autograph the picture which had already been autographed by her three sisters. She agreed and I passed the picture to her through the bars of the grille and when she returned the picture she gave me with it a little relic of the Little Flower.

Then, knowing that she had been present in the Little Flower's girlhood when Saint

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Therese was miraculously cured by the smiling statue of the Blessed Virgin, I said to her, "Sister, did you see that smiling vision of our Blessed Mother when Therese was cured?"

"No," she answered.

"But you were in the room with her, were you not?" I questioned.

"Yes," she replied, "but I saw nothing. Marie saw everything because she was kneeling at the head of the bed near the Little Flower, whereas I was kneeling at the foot of the Little Flower and Therese had taken such a sudden change for the worse that I, thinking that she was dying, buried my head in the bedclothes, weeping and praying at the same time, and so I saw nothing until we all saw a few moments later that she had been instantly cured."

Then I said to her, "Sister, are you not lonely here sometimes in this convent so far from your other sisters?"

She answered, "No, Father, I am where God wants me to be and I wouldn't be imitating my little sainted sister if I were to be sad in doing God's will. Of course all who leave home are a little lonely sometimes, n'est-ce pas, Father, but it is necessary to

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smile, n'est-ce pas? And the Little Flower helps me to smile."

I said, "But, Sister, do you not regret sometimes that you did not enter the Carmelite Convent instead of the Visitation Convent? It seems to me if I had a sister who had become a saint and who had made a convent famous for its sanctity and had three sisters in that convent, I would regret that in my youth I had not entered that convent, do you not feel that way?"

"No, Father, I have no such regrets because I had no vocation to the Carmelite Convent but to the Visitation rule and instead of regrets I have nothing but gratitude to God for having given me my Visitation vocation which I love."

I then said, "I suppose, Sister, that the Little Flower bestows many favors upon you, her sister."

"Yes," she answered, "many, many favors." And then, with a twinkle in her eyes, she added by way of a "come-back" to my doubts about her happiness in the Visitation Convent, "And not the least of the favors she gives me, Father, is to preserve my love for my Visitation vocation." All this was said with the most charming gentleness and with that ever-present ex-

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quisite smile which gave her some resemblance to the Little Flower in spite of her advanced age of 61.

I then asked her to write a little message, a little spiritual bouquet, in her own hand writing, as a souvenir of my interview of a sister of the Little Flower. She readily agreed and asking the loan of my fountain pen, wrote as follows: "I shall daily ask my little sainted sister, Saint Therese of the Child Jesus, to bless your mission of promoting devotion to her amongst the Americans." She signed her religious name, which is "Sister Frances Therese," and under it, at my request, she wrote her family name, "Marie Leonie Martin."

Then I asked her would she send a message to the members of the Little Flower Society in America and to all lovers of the Little Flower. Unlike the other three sisters, she didn't hesitate a moment. She must have been asked similar questions before because immediately she said, "Give them this message, Father: tell them that if we would please the Little Flower we must be humble as she was, and we will be humble if we will repeat frequently every day the ejaculation, 'Jesus, meek and hum-

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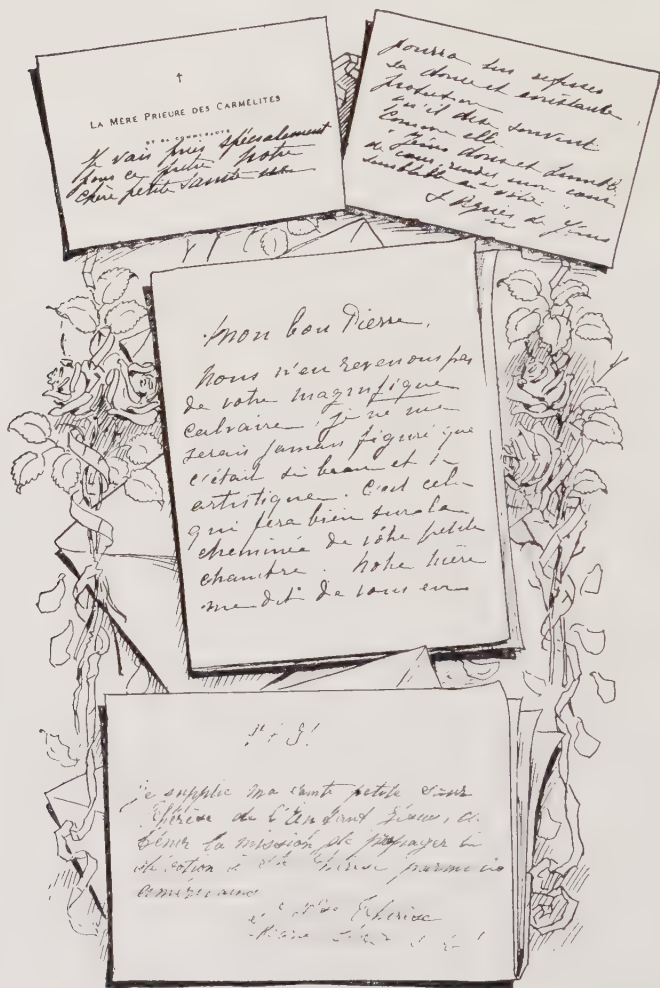
ble of heart, make my heart like unto thine.' ”

The Little Flower's sister's message to us, my dear friends, will bear many a meditation and much pondering. Let us heed that message; we may indeed be sure that we will not be proud or haughty, if we say frequently every day, “Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto thine.”

Leonie had nothing more to say that is important and I left the Visitation Convent with a prayer of thanksgiving in my heart to the Little Flower for having made it possible for me to talk at length with all four of her sisters.

Tomorrow, my dear friends, I will tell you of the very interesting visit I had with the only living cousin and playmate of the Little Flower.

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Letters from the Little Flower's Sisters in their own hand. Upper right: Letter from Leonie to Father Dolan. Upper left: Letter from Marie to Pierre congratulating him on the Crucifix made from the Rosebush. Lower picture: Letters from Pauline to Father Dolan.

Chapter VII

The Visit with Jeanne Guerin, the Little Flower's Cousin and Playmate

Today, my dear friends, I want to tell you of my visit with the only living cousin of the Little Flower, Jeanne Guerin. Guerin was the maiden name of the Little Flower's mother and Jeanne Guerin was the daughter of the Little Flower's mother's brother. The Little Flower's mother's brother had two daughters, Marie and Jeanne. Marie became a Carmelite nun and died some years ago and Jeanne is the lady of whom we are speaking today.

Jeanne Guerin was not only the Little Flower's cousin, but also her schoolmate. When the Little Flower became strong enough to be sent out to the Benedictine school which was some distance from the Little Flower's home the following arrangement was made: Therese with one of the servants of her father's household was to walk every morning from her home to her uncle's pharmacy and there she would be joined by her two cousins, Jeanne and Marie

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Guerin, and then all three little girls were to set out together for the school. So the lady of whom we are speaking today was one of the girls who walked with the Little Flower every morning and every evening to and from school.

By the way, I also visited the servant who accompanied the Little Flower every morning as far as the Little Flower's uncle's drug store, and she told me the following interesting anecdote which illustrates the girlhood character of the Little Flower. She said that one morning when she and the Little Flower were passing along the street, the Little Flower overheard, for the first time probably in her life, profanity on the part of some workmen and after murmuring a little ejaculatory prayer the Little Flower turned to the servant and said, "You know we must not judge the hearts of these poor men. They haven't had the graces nor the training that we have received and God knows that and perhaps they are more to be pitied than to be blamed." You see, my dear friends, how early in life the Little Flower began to practice the virtue of charity towards others, the virtue of charity which she later so developed that its perfection dazzles all who read her life.

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To return to the Little Flower's cousin: Jeanne Guerin was not only her cousin and schoolmate but also her playmate, because Jeanne's father, the Little Flower's uncle had a summer home at the seashore near Deauville and during vacation the Little Flower played daily along the seashore with her two cousins, Marie and Jeanne.

As a preliminary to our account of my visit with the cousin of the Little Flower, I wish to read you a short passage of the Little Flower's autobiography in which she refers to this cousin. I read it not only because it refers to the lady of whom we are speaking today, but also because of the beauty of the latter part of the passage which illustrates the ardor of the Little Flower's love of God. This is the passage: "Eight days after I had taken the veil my cousin, Jeanne Guerin, to whom I had always been very devoted, was married to Dr. La Néele, and at her next visit to me I heard of all the little attentions she lavished on her husband. I was greatly impressed and I determined that it should never be said that a woman in the world did more for her husband than I for my Beloved. Filled with fresh ardour, I strove with increased earnestness to please my Heavenly Spouse,

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the King of Kings, who had deigned to honor me by a divine alliance."

My visit with the Little Flower's cousin came about in this way. One day I said to my friend Pierre, the guardian of the Little Flower's tomb, "Pierre, are there any of the Little Flower's relatives besides her sisters who are still living here?"

He answered, "Yes, Jeanne Guerin."

"Do you know her?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," he answered, "we are great friends."

"Would you come with me to see her and introduce me?" I asked.

Pierre who is a saint, and amiability itself readily agreed.

Accordingly that afternoon Pierre and I set out for the Little Flower's cousin's home which is not far from the convent. A maid answered our ring and we were admitted. All the rooms on the first floor of the Little Flower's cousin's home open off a long corridor which leads from the door to the beautiful garden, a glimpse of which we could catch as we were conducted down the corridor to one of the parlors. The parlor was magnificently furnished and carpeted; exquisite paintings hung from the walls, and I was quite surprised to find such luxury

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and artistic beauty in a home of that little Normandy town.

While we were waiting I whispered to Pierre: "What a contrast, Pierre, between the surroundings of the two cousins and playmates. For Jeanne Guerin, all this luxury; for the Little Flower, a narrow and bare cell of the Carmelite convent."

"Yes," said Pierre, "but now the Little Flower possesses all the riches of God's palace in Heaven."

"But," I said, "so will Jeanne possess that kingdom some day."

"Yes," admitted Pierre, "but her place will not be so high in Heaven as the Little Flower's."

"Is she not good then; has her wealth made her proud and haughty?" I asked.

"Oh, no," said Pierre, "she is very amiable and very humble as you shall see. And," he added, "there is no one in Lisieux more charitable to the poor."

Looking out the window we saw walking slowly in the garden an old lady accompanied by a little girl.

"There she is," said Pierre, "the lady is the Little Flower's cousin."

"Who is the girl?" I asked.

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"She is an orphan which the Little Flower's cousin adopted after her husband died," he answered.

The maid just then approached the lady and announced us and at that the lady walked rapidly into the house. She didn't come to the parlor though and I wondered why not. Pierre said that his guess was that she had gone upstairs to sit before a mirror a while before she came to see the visitors. After while she came in and apologized for the delay saying that she hadn't expected visitors and that therefore she had had to dress up a little before coming into the parlor. So Pierre's guess was correct.

She was a charming lady, about sixty, I should say, thin and short, hair just beginning to gray, bright eyes, no wrinkles and red cheeks as have all the old women of Normandy I saw. She was dressed in black. Her manner was delightful and cordial in the extreme. She greeted Pierre, who introduced me as the director of the Little Flower Society, whose work was to promote devotion to the Little Flower in America.

"What a beautiful mission," she said, using, strangely enough, the same expression that Celine had used.

I told her that I come not only out of curi-

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osity to see the Little Flower's cousin and playmate but to ask some questions about the Little Flower and gather first hand information for a book I was writing and I told her that to that end I had already interviewed the Little Flower's sisters.

"Oh, if you have seen them," she said, "they have told you all. I think I could add nothing, but I will answer any questions you may want to ask."

"Of course," I said, "you often played with the Little Flower when you were girls?"

"Oh, yes, hundreds of times," she said, "out there in that garden," pointing out the window.

"Did she ever lose her temper?" I asked.

"Never," she answered, "not once as long as I knew her, although as a little girl of three before she came to Lisieux, it is said that she knew well how to display temper." The Little Flower confesses these infantile fits of temper in her own autobiography. They all happened before the time which she terms her conversion, her conversion at the age of four.

"Did the Little Flower play as ardently and wholeheartedly as other children?" I asked.

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"No," she said, confirming what Sister Francis de Sales* had told me.

"Of course, I was older than the Little Flower and it was my sister Marie who played with her more than I, but I would say that the Little Flower did not care a great deal to play as other girls would and neither did my sister Marie."

"But," I said, "what did they do then, in the garden if they didn't play?"

"Oh," she said, "they played, but their games were religious in character. They played at hermit and at mass, benediction, vespers and so on."

"But were they always so serious and solemn in their play?"

"Oh," she said, "they were never long-faced even while they were playing those religious games. They were always very joyous. The Little Flower never seemed sad. My father used to call her his little ray of sunshine. And it was an experience," she added, "to see her smile. I have never seen such a charming smile. But nevertheless she was always very thoughtful. Everyone remarked how absorbed in thought she always seemed to be."

*See the next Chapter for an account of Father Dolan's visit with Sister Francis de Sales. [Editor's Note.]

The Visit With Jeanne Guerin

“You went to school every day with the Little Flower,” I said, “and do you remember anything that happened on your way to and from school with her that is worth recording?”

She thought a while and said, “Well yes, this is an amusing incident I remember,” and then she told a story which the Little Flower herself tells in her own Autobiography and with which therefore I was familiar, although of course I didn’t say so. The story, however, is worth retelling.

Her story was, “One day we were returning from school and Marie and the Little Flower were walking ahead of me and a girl who was walking with me and it seems that Marie and the Little Flower decided not to wait until they arrived home to play at hermit but to begin then on the street to imitate the modesty of the hermits by casting down their eyes. ‘You lead me’ said the Little Flower to Marie. ‘I am going to close my eyes.’ ‘I am going to close mine too,’ said Marie. So they joined hands and walked along together with their eyes closed, the blind leading the blind. But unhappily they hadn’t proceeded far when they bumped into a stand in front of a fruit store and scattered the merchandise all

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over the street and the proprietor dashed out in a fury and the little girls took to their heels, with their eyes wide open then in order to put on full speed."

During the remainder of my visit the Little Flower's cousin didn't tell me a great deal that isn't generally known about the Little Flower.

I said "I suppose the Little Flower does a great deal for you, her cousin and school-mate."

"She gives me many, many favors," said Jeanne, "but she doesn't give the members of her family the material favors she gives to other people. She sends them instead spiritual favors. For instance she has given me wealth which I do not enjoy because my sister is dead and my husband gone. I have had to adopt a little orphan for company in this big house in my old age. But she has given me what is greater than material favors, namely the grace to live as she did not so much for this world as for the next and therefore I am happy and spiritually secure and so I couldn't ask for more from my little sainted cousin than she has given me. Besides, since she has been dead she seems to be very close to me and that is one of my greatest consolations."

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Then I asked her to sign her name to a little card or picture of the Little Flower which I had with me and she wrote: "Asking not to be forgotten in your mass and in the prayers of the members of the Little Flower Society in America. (Signed) Jeanne Guerin."

As we left the house Pierre said, "Was I not right Father, is she not indeed humble and amiable and gentle?"

"Yes, Pierre," I said, "she is charming. She is all that we would expect in the cousin and playmate of the Little Flower."

Tomorrow our subject will be my visit with one of the Little Flower's teachers, Sister Francis de Sales.

Chapter VIII

The Visit with Sister Francis de Sales, the Little Flower's Teacher

Tonight, my dear friends, our subject is my visit with Sister Francis de Sales, a Benedictine nun who was the Little Flower's teacher for five years and who prepared her for her first holy Communion.

The interview with the Little Flower's teacher came about in this way: I inquired if any of the Benedictine nuns who taught the Little Flower were still living and I was told that there was one, Sister Francis de Sales, who was now old and feeble but with whom, perhaps, I could secure an interview.

So I went up to the Benedictine school which the Little Flower attended for five years, from the age of eight to the age of thirteen, from 1881 to 1886. In the chapel of the school there is a placard at the Communion rail which reads: "Therese Martin made her first Communion at this communion rail on May 8, 1884." There is also in the school a little oratory in which are preserved many interesting souvenirs of the

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Cardinal Merry Del Val and his written message to the National Director of the Society of the Little Flower.

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Little Flower; for instance, her first Communion veil, some of her school books, one of her compositions, a crucifix which the Little Flower brought from Rome to her catechism teacher, Sister Francis de Sales, and also the desk which she used and on which she had engraved with a pen knife not her own initials but the initials of the Blessed Virgin.

After viewing these souvenirs I asked the Sister Portress to see Sister Francis de Sales. I was told that she hadn't been well and was extremely feeble in her advanced age, but that perhaps she would come to the parlor. I was taken to the parlor and asked to have a seat before the grille. In a few moments the curtain of the grille was pulled back and there was the teacher of the Little Flower. She was indeed old and feeble but she was nevertheless most agreeable and willing to talk. She is now eighty years old and was in the neighborhood of forty when she taught the Little Flower.

I had pencil and paper with me to jot down her answers to my questions. I said to her first, "Sister, will you please talk slowly, because my French isn't all that it should be."

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She answered, "I have to talk slowly, Father, because I haven't many teeth left." And she didn't have many, either.

Then I asked her, "Did you find the Little Flower, when she was in your classes, an ordinary pupil?"

"In some ways, yes, she was ordinary, but in other ways she was most extraordinary. First, she was extraordinarily intelligent. She was very talented and precocious, and when she first came to us, at the age of eight, she was placed in a class which contained pupils who were all from four to six years older than she, and amongst these, some, of course, at first surpassed her, but very soon she took her place as leader of her class. Sometimes by way of a rare exception she obtained marks that were not the highest. At such times the little girl was inconsolable, not because of personal pride but because she couldn't bear the thought that in the evening her father would have less pleasure than usual in looking over her marks. Then too she was extraordinarily obedient, scrupulously faithful to the minutest particulars of the rules of the school. And then again she was extraordinarily pious; her heart and mind were always on

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God and she always wanted to talk of God and of the Saints."

"Did you think that she would one day be a saint, Sister?"

"Oh, no, one doesn't guess that of a girl eight or nine years old. It was evident to all of us however, that she had never lost her baptismal innocence. I remember that one of the sisters said to me one day: 'Did you notice the angelic expression on the countenance of Therese Martin? One sees other children with features as fine, but this child has Heaven in her eyes.' We knew, Father, that we had a little treasure in Therese Martin, but we didn't estimate her at that time at her true worth."

"Would you tell me something, Sister, about her life in school?"

"Well," she said, "she didn't care much to play with the others on the playground. She preferred the garden with its birds and flowers to the playground and preferred the chapel to the garden. Often during recreation she would go to one of the sisters to talk of convent life or to seek religious counsel and advice. I remember once she astonished me during recreation by asking me, 'Sister, how does one make a meditation?' A meditation is an advanced form of mental

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prayer practiced by nuns and priests and religious, and it is of course most extraordinary that a little girl of nine should ask how to make a meditation.

“She almost always took the prizes offered for academic excellence, especially in her favorite subjects, church history and catechism. She was so perfect in catechism and showed such a sure knowledge of spiritual things and asked so many questions about subtle religious problems that the Chaplain of the school used to call her ‘his little doctor of theology’—his little doctor of theology at nine or ten years of age. ‘She seemed endowed with a marvelous intuition,’ he said, ‘for things pertaining to the spiritual world.’ ”

“Did the other pupils like her, sister? Was she popular?”

“With the sisters, yes, she was a general favorite, but with the pupils, no. They were jealous of her intellectual superiority and outside the classroom they made her pay in a thousand little ways for her little classroom triumphs. Secondly, the fact that she was never punished because she was never disobedient prevented popularity. This immunity from punishment acted as kind of a

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barrier between her and the others who were punished frequently.”

“Then again, Father,” she continued, “as in all schools the world over, then as well as now, some pupils were always ready to take advantage of the momentary absence of the teacher to create general disorder. Therese had been taught at home that although such misconduct was not gravely sinful, God would be more pleased if pupils were to be strictly obedient, not to avoid punishment, not to win the favor of their teachers, but to please Him. She therefore in the midst of disorder in the classroom or corridors was always silent, and her silence, noticed of course by the others was a rebuke to the disturbers and brought upon her head their displeasure. And even children,” Sister Francis de Sales went on, “do not tolerate rebukes, even though silent from one of their companions.”

The Little Flower’s obedience therefore, her desire to please God in all things was one of the causes of her unpopularity.

“Again,” the sister said, “Therese didn’t like games. In fact, she was too frail to play as strenuously as the others, and when she did play, she tells us herself ‘I was useless,’ and the others took full opportunity on the

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playground to make fun of the awkwardness and lack of skill of her who put them all to shame in the classroom. The result of all this was a mutual coolness between her and the others which obliged her to spend her recreations apart from the animated and noisy groups of other children. At such times she would often be found studying her catechism because although she grasped its doctrine with remarkable facility, the literal answers of the catechism she always found difficult to memorize."

But with the Little Flower's affectionate nature it was necessary for her to have some friends and she did have two friends, little serious minded girls like herself. Of the shipwreck of one of these friendships she tells us in this passage of her Autobiography: "Just about this time I chose as friends two little girls of my own age. It happened that for some reason one of them had to remain at home for several months. While she was away, I thought of her very often, and upon her return I showed great pleasure at seeing her again. All I met with, however, was a glance of indifference—my friendship was not appreciated, I felt this very keenly and I no longer sought an affection which had proved so inconstant.

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Nevertheless I still love my little school friend and I pray for her; God has given me a faithful heart and when once I love, I love forever. I am most thankful to our Lord that He has allowed me to find only bitterness in earthly friendships. With a heart such as mine I should so easily have been taken captive and had my wings clipped. How then should I have been able 'to fly away and be at rest?' * How can a heart given up to human affection be closely united to God? It appears to me impossible. I have seen so many souls who, having been allured like poor moths by this treacherous light, fly into the flame and burn their wings, then return injured to our Lord, the Divine Fire which burns and does not consume."

So you see, my dear friends, the Little Flower was one of those rare souls of whom God seems to be jealous. He demanded her whole heart; He wished that she would not give even one small corner of it to creatures.

It was therefore the Little Flower's successes in school, the fact that she was never punished, her inability to play, and the jealousy of her companions which were the causes of her unpopularity. "Although,"

*Psalm Iiv, 7.

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Sister Francis hastened to add, "the Little Flower was always gentle, kind and most patient with her companions, who, except those who were utterly blinded by jealousy couldn't help but like her a little and in their hearts admire her and guess her worth."

Then I said, "Sister, do you remember anything that happened in the classroom while you were teaching the Little Flower that is worth recording?"

She thought a moment and then told this interesting story: One day she, Sister Francis de Sales, had been explaining to the class the fate of those little children who die without baptism. Throughout the entire explanation there was an expression of extreme puzzlement on the Little Flower's countenance.

Finally Therese raised her hand and said, "Sister, does God not love all souls?"

"Yes, my child," the sister replied.

"Does He not love the souls of little children?"

"Yes."

"Well then, how can He punish them; they never did any wrong; they never committed any sins themselves."

The sister explained that God did not punish them, that they enjoyed a state of hap-

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piness far beyond any experienced here on earth. Their only deprivation was the deprivation of the vision of God. They could not see God.

But the Little Flower was not yet satisfied and after a moment's thought she declared, "Well, if I were God, Sister, I would let the little children see me at least once."

Later on, of course, the Little Flower understood better this mystery of God's dealings with little children who die without baptism. But you see, my dear friends, how early in life the Little Flower began to give signs of her mission of teaching the mercy and goodness of God. Even as a child, she could not understand how any bounds could be set to God's goodness and mercy. And this same little girl who in the classroom puzzled over God's apparent harshness to unbaptized children, later taught millions by the beautiful comparisons, and by the poetical language of her Autobiography, the illimitable mercy and goodness of God.

I had asked so many questions that the aged Sister Francis was perceptibly tiring and so I asked no more questions that day, but at this juncture I thanked and bade farewell to the Sister who had given me

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such a complete and vivid picture of the Little Flower's school life.

In these little talks I have given about my visits with those who knew St. Therese, I have left it to you to draw your own lesson and your own practical applications. The stories of the Little Flower's childhood told by her sisters, and retold to you during the week in these talks ought to cause parents to realize the value of home influence and to resolve to give their children similar training. The narratives of the Little Flower's love of the Blessed Sacrament ought to occasion resolutions to be more devout to the Blessed Sacrament, the secret of her sanctity and the support of our own virtue. Other stories told of her love of our Blessed Mother and her thoughtfulness of others, of her charity, undoubtedly occasioned resolutions which the Little Flower will help you always to keep.

All have doubtless been led during the week to see and to admire the sweetness, the charm and the beauty of the Little Flower's life, charm and beauty which like the perfume of roses cannot be resisted. Each one has been led too to contrast the beauty of her life with the comparative ugliness of his own and then naturally came the resolution

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to uproot from the garden of our lives, all the weeds we find there and to make that garden, by frequent Communion, preserving prayer and persistent effort to imitate the Little Flower's virtues, a garden of roses.

That the Little Flower may bestow upon each of you the rose you most need, whether it be greater humility, greater love of God, greater prayerfulness, greater purity, greater charity, greater love of Mary or greater love of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, is my prayer.

Chapter IX

An Audience with the Holy Father Concerning the Little Flower

A year ago last May 17th our Holy Father assembled the court of the Vatican in St. Peter's Cathedral and there solemnly declared the Little Flower to be a saint.

It is a happy coincidence, my dear friends, that today on the first anniversary of that canonization of the Little Flower, I should be speaking to you of an audience with that same Holy Father—an audience during which he spoke almost exclusively of the Little Flower.

My first morning in Rome last April I went to St. Peter's to say Mass at the tomb of Saint Peter whose body lies under the peerless dome, upon which are written, in letters of the gold, the words: "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church." After the Mass I went to the Vatican to ask an audience, which was arranged for the next day.

The next morning I passed through the famous Vatican bronze doors at which are

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Pierre and the Author in the Cemetery before the Admirable Little Flower statue which marks the spot where her body formerly lay.

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posted the Swiss guards in their picturesque uniforms and was escorted up interminable marble staircases, across the inner court of the Vatican and into an immense marble hall upon the walls of which hung some of the world's most famous tapestries and paintings. About a hundred people were waiting there and I began to fear that instead of the private audience which had been promised me, I was to have a public audience in which I could not speak to the Holy Father. But in due time the Papal Chamberlain appeared and summoned me and without speaking a word conducted me along many, many corridors lined with papal guards until finally he broke his silence, saying, "We are now approaching the apartments of the Holy Father." We continued on past the Noble Guard in their glorious uniforms up to the very door leading to the rooms of the Pope. There he bade me wait, he entered the Pope's room, returned in a few moments and said, "The Holy Father will now receive you." He led the way into the very presence of the Pope.

What an experience! There all clothed in white sat Christ's vicar on earth, the successor of Saint Peter to whom our Lord had said, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I

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will build my Church. I will give to thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven."

I knelt and kissed the Holy Father's ring. The papal chamberlain introduced me and then left me alone with the most exalted personage in the world, Christ's representative on earth, the infallible head of the one true Church, the spiritual monarch whose dominion is world wide, that King who rules spiritually over 300,000,000 of souls, alone with the most exalted of all lovers of the Little Flower, with him who had beatified her in 1923 and canonized her in 1925.

The Holy Father waited for me to speak. I said, "Holy Father, may I say a word."

"You may say many words," he answered with a kindly smile. The Holy Father looks exactly like his pictures except that he looks very tired. I would say his most distinguished characteristic is an exquisite mildness and gentleness of manner—the manner of one who bears a heavy burden but who bears it without complaint and with infinite patience.

I said, "Holy Father, I have come to Rome to ask your blessing upon my particular work."

"What is that work?" he said slowly and rather indifferently, I thought.

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“My work is to promote in America devotion to Saint Therese.”

Immediately he brightened and said, “What a very beautiful mission!” and from then on his attention and interest was much more marked.

I said, “There are thousands in America, Holy Father, whose special affection you have won chiefly because of what you have done for Saint Therese.”

He smiled and said, “We call her in Europe Little Therese but in America you call her (and then he used his only words of English, speaking with a slight accent) the Little Flower.”

“But,” I said, “there are other thousands in America, Your Holiness, who know her only by name and hence my mission of going from city to city and from church to church speaking of her and of her Little Way. I have come to ask your blessing upon that work.”

“Oh,” said the Pope, “not one but three blessings are necessary, one for the success of your work,” and here he made the sign of the cross and gave me his ring to kiss; “the second for yourself that you may have the strength and the health and the holiness to do your work,” and then again he made

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the sign of the cross; "the third for the people to whom you speak, that they may listen with those good dispositions that are essential if your words are to bear fruit," and again the sign of the cross and the ring.

I thanked him and then asked him if he would not send to the members of the Little Flower Society in America his special personal blessing and empower me to give it in his name upon the close of novenas in honor of Saint Therese. He granted that permission, confirmed later by a letter from the Papal Secretary of State, Cardinal Gasparri and that blessing will be bestowed after the sermon.

Then I told the Holy Father about the crucifix made from the Little Flower's rose bush * and given to the American National Shrine, and I asked him to indulge the crucifix so that the people of the National Shrine might gain an indulgence of 300 days every time they venerated it.

The Holy Father told me to put my request in writing and let it pass through the regular channels and that when it came he would approve it. The indulgence has since

*See Chapter Ten for explanation of the Crucifix made from the Little Flower's rose bush.

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been received from Rome from the Sacred Congregation.

Then I asked him if he would not send a message to the members of the Little Flower Society in America and to all lovers of the Little Flower.

He answered, "Tell them that all should study carefully and imitate closely the humble life and the Little Way of Saint Therese who is an exquisite miniature of perfect holiness." High praise, indeed, from the vicar of Christ—"An exquisite miniature of perfect holiness."

Then I asked the Holy Father if he would explain what he meant in his sermon on May 17th, on the occasion of her canonization when he called her in that sermon his "Guiding Star."

He answered, his face all aglow with enthusiasm, "That is just what she is, my guiding star. Whenever I have a problem that is particularly difficult and which I can not solve, I take it to her and she always immediately clarifies and solves it for me."

Then the Holy Father said, "Again, Father, my blessing upon you and your work and may Saint Therese bless both you and it." Then came his last words, so soft and beautiful in Italian, "Addio, caro padre,

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addio," "Good-bye, dear Father, Good-bye." With these affectionate words of the Holy Father ringing in my ears I left the presence of the Holy Father.

That same Holy Father, my dear friends, on May 17th last year, moving amid scenes of surpassing splendor in St. Peter's, that world cathedral, solemnly enrolled the name of the Little Flower upon the register of the saints, calling her on that occasion his "advocate," his "patron," calling her his "guiding star" and his "refuge in difficulty."

What a marvel it is that this young and humble Carmelite nun should win such titles from the vicar of Christ! What a marvel it is that this little girl nun of Normandy should be called the "Guiding Star" of the successor of St. Peter, the great Pope of Rome! And what a privilege it is and what an honor that this little girl saint who spends her heaven doing good upon earth should have chosen to take up her abode amongst us at this, her American National Shrine! What an honor that she should have chosen to bring here to our Shrine every possible relic of her most pure body and every portable souvenir of her earthly life! Having brought these relics and souvenirs

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Most **H**oly **F**ather



he Rev **A**lbert **D**. **D**olan, D.C.,
National Director of the **L**ittle **F**lower **S**ociety,
humbly prostrate at the feet of Your Holiness,
implored the apostolic benediction on his work
and also for the members of the Society.

Signature

Blessing bestowed by the Pope in his own handwriting upon
the Little Flower Society and its Director.

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she will surely bring us also her smile and her shower of roses.

“Saint Therese,” we say you to-day, “by reason of all these, your precious relics, you are surely here amongst us to-day. You are here smiling down upon us tenderly from your little shrine. You are here and we hail your smiling presence and we greet you for the Little Queen that you are, and we say to you, Little Queen, Queen of the roses, pray for us to-day. Help us to heed the message of the Holy Father, ‘To study and imitate your Little Way,’ help us to heed the messages of your sisters ‘To imitate your humility,’ ‘To hold ourselves aloof from all that is low and base and ignoble and immodest,’ help us ‘to imitate you in your love of our Blessed Mother and in your love of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament,’ and we ask you, our dear little guardian, in the words of your sister, Pauline, to keep us always ‘under your sweet protection.’”

Chapter X

Pierre, the Little Flower Sacristan and Guardian of Her Tomb

Tonight, my dear friends, I wish to tell you of Pierre, the Little Flower's sacristan, the guardian of the Little Flower's tomb and the custodian of her Chapel at Lisieux. Nowhere in the world, I think, could there be found a man more sincerely and completely given over to devotion to the Little Flower, and excepting my interviews with the Little Flower's sisters, I enjoyed my interview with Pierre most.

Pierre Derrien is his full name, although no one in Lisieux ever calls him "Monseieur Derrien" but it is always, in referring to him, "Pierre," and in talking to him, "my good Pierre." When you go to Lisieux you will see in cassock and surplice darting here and there and everywhere about the Chapel, lighting the candles for the various Masses, supplying the vestments to the priests, as one after one they say Mass at the tomb, changing the wine and water always at the exact time, a little, short, pleasant looking

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man with black hair, bright eyes and a great mustache, his lips always ready for a smile in spite of his serious demeanor. "To go quickly and to return soon" seems to be his motto. He is the first one in the Chapel in the morning and he is the last one to leave the tomb in the evening. Throughout the day he bestows the most charming courtesy upon the most humble of the pilgrims, answering their incessant questions always with remarkable patience. When he speaks of the Little Flower it is always "notre petite Therese" or "our little Therese." When he speaks of Pauline the Mother Superior of the convent, it is always "notre Mere," "our Mother," as if he were himself a novice and she, his superior. It was Pierre who prepared the 160 Masses said in the Chapel on the day of the Little Flower's Beatification. It was Pierre to whom Cardinal Vici referred when, after observing the efficiency of the little man in serving so many priests at once, the Cardinal said, "Voila un sacristain qui a de la tete," "There is a sacristan who has a head."

In 1904 Pierre was stricken with a grave malady and had been abandoned by the doctors. In his extremity he implored the intercession of the Little Flower. To his joy he

Pierre

was immediately cured and he immediately undertook a journey to Lisieux to thank his patron. He prayed long at the tomb to her and then called at the convent to report his cure to Mother Agnes. Later on he made a pilgrimage alone to Rome and begged a private audience with the Holy Father, who was then Pius X. Surely the Little Flower was with him, for this poor little Breton, a lone pilgrim without any sponsor obtained the private audience with the Holy Father. Pius X, taking the head of the kneeling Pierre between his hands, said to him with his paternal smile, "You have the faith, my son, and the good God will bless you."

Pierre had scarcely returned to his native town in Britany when Pauline who had been much impressed by the touching devotion exhibited by Pierre to the Little Flower, sent him a letter in which she offered him the enviable post of guardian of the Little Flower's tomb. Pierre could not contain himself with delight. From then on, he told me, he has not had an unhappy moment.

"What could make me happier," he said, "than to be permitted by the Little Flower's own sister to watch at the tomb of little

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Pierre, the Little Flower's Sacristan, the Guardian of her Tomb and custodian of the Chapel.

Pierre

Therese, to keep her grave in order and to see that fresh flowers are always placed upon it."

Then later, when the Little Flower's body, after her beatification was removed from the cemetery to the church, Pierre was made the sacristan of the Chapel in addition to retaining his post as guardian of the Little Flower's tomb. No one could possibly fulfill the duties of sacristan and guardian with more faithfulness and exactitude than Pierre, and the Little Flower's sisters, recognizing fully his efficiency and his work, took him into their confidence, made him their familiar, always referred to him as "the good Pierre," so that Pierre is as much a part of the Lisieux Carmel as one of the altars.

Because of his remarkable, child-like devotion to the Little Flower, Pierre was given the honor of being chosen as the banner-bearer for the pilgrimage from Lisieux which went to Rome for the Beatification of the Little Flower. During the public audience with the Holy Father given to the Lisieux pilgrimage, Pierre called out to the Pope as the latter walked past, "Tres Saint Pere, voulez-vous benir ma baniere," "Most

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Holy Father, would you please bless my banner?"

The Holy Father glanced up astonished at this unwonted interruption, and then seeing the pleading eyes of the kneeling Pierre, walked over to him, fingered the banner admiringly and said, "What a beautiful banner!" and blessed both the banner and Pierre, giving his hand to Pierre to kiss.

Pierre by reason of his audacity, became immediately famous upon his return to Lisieux, but Pierre discussing the incident always dismissed it lightly saying, "It was the Little Therese who inspired the Holy Father."

I had read an account of this incident in a French book and had seen in the same book Pierre's picture, and therefore when I entered the Lisieux Chapel to say Mass my first morning, I recognized Pierre and said to him in the sacristy before I vested "You are Pierre, are you not?"

He looked at me, surprised and answered "Yes, Father, but I do not remember having met you before."

"No, you never met me, Pierre," I said, "I am from America, from Chicago."

"And you know me?" he exclaimed, wonderingly.

Pierre

“Yes, Pierre” I answered, “I know you. You’re the man who said to the Holy Father at the Beatification audience in Rome, ‘Holy Father, will you bless my banner?’ You see I know all about you. I, from distant America, am acquainted with Pierre of Lisieux. You see you are a famous man, Pierre.”

Pierre beamed his pleasure and from that moment we were great friends. He served my Mass and bestowed every possible attention upon me after Mass. How long was I going to be at Lisieux? . . . Well, I could say Mass at any altar I chose; at the altar of the tomb every morning if I wished, and anything that he could do for me while he was there he would be proud to do.

“Well, Pierre,” I said, “I could have no better guide to the Little Flower’s tomb in the cemetery than you, who were guardian of her tomb for so long. Could you arrange to be my guide to the cemetery?”

Of course he could, and that afternoon Pierre and I visited the cemetery which is a considerable distance from the town. As we walked along the road to the cemetery, Pierre said, “Four times a day for fifteen years, Father, I walked this road while the

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Little Flower's body was still in the cemetery."

He took me first to the tomb of the parents of the Little Flower. After the death of Mr. Martin, Mr. Guerin, the Little Flower's mother's brother, brought the body of the Little Flower's mother from Alencon to Lisieux and the father and mother were buried together under a plain but massive headstone on which is inscribed "La Famille Martin" "The Martin Family" and underneath that in French "The race of the just shall be blessed." We knelt reverently at the tomb for several moments but I could not bring myself to pray **for** but rather **to** that saintly couple.

We passed on then to the tomb of the Little Flower and after our prayers there, Pierre told me many stories of his experiences at the tomb during all the years which the Little Flower's body was there. A magnificent new monument to the Little Flower, the one which Leonia's godmother, Madam Tifenne claims is the best likeness of any to the Little Flower, has been erected at the place which once was her tomb.

Pierre

Later Pierre was my guardian during my first visit to the Little Flower's home and, as you have read, accompanied me at my visit to the home of Jeanne Guerin.

One day Pierre took me into the sacristy at Carmel after Mass and said, "Father, I will show you something that few see," and laying his hands on his lips to signal silence, he conducted me past the little door, now sealed and inscribed: "At this door the Little Flower left her father after the last farewell embrace before she passed through this door to make her entrance into Carmel." On we went until we were in the inner sacristy which is separated by a thin wall from the actual cloistered Carmel. In the wall there is a large revolving door which Pierre turned.

"I turn this every morning, Father, before Mass, because the sister sacristan in the interior sacristy prepares the chalice for the priest who says the community Mass for the sisters in the morning. Before Mass I enter here, turn the door, and I find there on the slide the Chalice already prepared by the sister sacristan of the convent. As you know, Father, the Little Flower, was for a long time the sister sacristan of the convent and mille, mille fois, a thou-

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sand, thousand times, she put her hand where my hand is now. You may put your hand there too, Father," he said, after kissing the handle of the revolving door. I placed my hand there and following Pierre's example kissed it reverently.

Pierre said, "Father, I have a souvenir of the Little Flower which this afternoon I wish to show you. It is absolutely unique in the world. There is no other memento like it. I call it my inestimable treasure. I would not part with it for all the world. It is my most precious possession."

"What is it Pierre?" I said, very much interested.

"Be patient, Father, and this afternoon at two, I will call for you at the Inn and shall take you to my little room and show it to you."

My curiosity was of course greatly aroused but I asked no more questions. That afternoon Pierre appeared and brought me over to his little room near the sacristy. On the way he said: "I suppose, Father, that you have been making a thousand guesses as to my treasure."

I said, "Yes, Pierre."

"Well, Father, you will see it in a moment. You know," he said, "in the lifetime of the

Pierre



The National Shrine of the Little Flower—called the "Rose Bower," the most beautiful Shrine in America.

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Little Flower there was in the convent garden a rose bush. This rose bush grew in the grotto of the garden and beneath the rose bush the Little Flower often went each day to pray to our Blessed Mother in the grotto. From this rose bush she daily culled the roses for her statue to the Infant Jesus. When the convent Chapel was enlarged after her death to accommodate the throngs of pilgrims the rose bush was uprooted. I begged Mother Agnes to give the rose bush to me. 'What will you do with it, my good Pierre', said Mother Agnes. 'Leave that to me Mother. When I am finished I will show it to you,' he replied. 'Well', said Mother Agnes, 'I know no one who would appreciate this precious souvenir of the Little Flower more than you Pierre, so you may have it.' Of course," continued Pierre, "I was overjoyed. I set to work immediately and with the greatest pains and after several months of work interrupted by my daily duties, I finished my treasure which I hold so precious and which in a moment you will see."

Arriving at his little room, Pierre opened the door and the most conspicuous object in the room was a magnificent crucifix, an im-

Pierre

mense "Calvaire" or "Calvary", as they call it in French.

"There is my treasure," said Pierre, pointing to the Crucifix. Before it several vigil lights were burning and before it also there was a prie dieu beside which Pierre knelt, motioning to me to kneel on the prie dieu.

After our little prayer, Pierre explained to me in great detail the difficulties that he had had in making the crucifix entirely out of the wood of the rose tree. I followed his explanation admiringly and Pierre said, "I can see Father, that you envy me the possession of my treasure."

"Yes indeed, Pierre, I do envy you," I said.

"You know Father," he declared proudly, "The Little Flower's body now lies in the exact spot where this rose tree once grew and of course that circumstance increases the worth of my treasure. I must show you the letter of congratulation the sisters of the convent sent me after they had seen the Calvaire."

He then showed me a note* in Marie's handwriting which read as follows: "My

*This note is now pinned to the case in which the crucifix is reserved at the National Shrine, Chicago.

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good Pierre: We cannot get over your magnificent crucifix, though we never imagined that you could make anything as beautiful and as artistic from the rose bush. Our Reverend Mother told me to compliment you also for her. The entire community has admired your masterpiece very much and cannot imagine how you were able to make this crucifix from the trunk of the rose tree, but our Little Flower always acts thus towards us. That she may continue to bless you is our prayer. (Signed) Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart."

"Celine, too," said Pierre, "One day at the grille added her word of praise for my crucifix, praise which I valued particularly because she is an artist herself and loves artistic and original objects. She called my Calvaire "Merveilleux," "Wonderful."

Pierre then proceeded to show me some of his other souvenirs, a piece of the coffin in which the Little Flower's body lay, some of the earth from her grave, a piece of the carpet on which she stood when she took her vows and a piece of the silk and silver band which bound the remains of the Little Flower when they were transferred from the cemetery to the church, also a piece of the bridal gown she wore when she went up

Pierre

to take her vows, all relics which had been given to him personally by the Little Flower's sisters.

After having allowed me to inspect closely and handle these precious relics Pierre said, "I see that you love our little Saint much and it would be great pleasure to me if you would accept these little relics for your American National Shrine."

I was dumbfounded for I had not expected any such generosity. I thanked Pierre as best I could.

"Indeed I would like to do more for you, Father, if I could. It is too bad there is only one crucifix made from the rose bush or I would surely give you one if I had two."

"Is there only one Pierre?"

"Of course," he said, "Father, only one. I used all the rose tree for my crucifix with the exception of parts of a few little branches from which the sisters of the Little Flower made souvenir objects which they themselves keep and hold precious."

During the remainder of my stay in Lisieux I saw much of Pierre. Every day we took a little walk together. Every morning he served my Mass. Frequently in the evening he accepted my invitation to have supper with me in the little inn at which I was staying.

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One night he brought over to me a little poem, which he called "A little story of the crucifix obtained from the rose tree which grew in the convent of Lisieux and beneath which Therese of the Child Jesus often went to pray and to cull the roses for her Little Jesus." The first verse of the poem translated into prose reads: "The rose bush (rosier), from which my beautiful rose-cross is made, once covered with its branches Mary Immaculate in her grotto of Carmel. Under the branches of my rose-cross often in times past Sister Therese knelt whispering the Ave Maria. Now her holy body rests where once my rose bush grew."

Several verses of the poem end with these words: "Pour tout le monde je ne donnerais mon rosier, mon beau calvaire,"—"For all the world I would not part with my rose-tree, my beautiful crucifix."

On another occasion he said to me, "Father, perhaps you would like to see little notes that I have received at one time or another from one or the other of the sisters of the Little Flower," and he gave me these little notes* which throw some little

*These notes in the handwriting of the Sisters of the Little Flower are in the souvenir case at the National Shrine of the Little Flower in Chicago.

Pierre

light on the daily life of the Carmelite sisters of the Little Flower.

Finally the night before I was to leave Lisieux Pierre said to me, "Father, will you let me see again the picture of the Shrine in America to the Little Flower, the picture of the crowds which you showed me the other night."

Wondering why he was anxious to see the picture again I mounted to my room, secured the pictures and put them before Pierre. He looked at them long and silently and finally said, "All the crowds which come to the Shrine would be very happy if they had my crucifix, made from the rose bush, to venerate, would they not, Father?"

I answered, wonderingly, "I n d e e d, Pierre, the crowds would be delighted with such a treasure, with such a beautiful souvenir of the Little Flower."

"I asked the question, Father, because ever since I first saw in your eyes, in my room, how much you envied me the possession of my rose bush, I have been thinking of my crucifix and of the ultimate disposition that I will make of it. I feel that I haven't long to live and then after my death to whom would my crucifix go? I would not give it to any of my relatives

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because perhaps in any one of their homes it might after a while be placed in a corner and neglected. If I were to give it to a monastery or a convent it would serve to remind only a few of the Little Flower because being in a private place it could not bring a great deal of honor to her. But, I said to myself, if I were to give my crucifix to the Director of her Society in America, if I were to give it to him not for himself but for the Shrine, where so many thousands come weekly to honor the Little Flower, then indeed would the crucifix be placed where the most honor would be done to it and where it would be most frequently venerated, where it would remind thousands of the love of the Little Flower for the Infant Jesus, for whose shrine she so often plucked the roses from my rose bush. But if I were to wait until my death, if I were to will the crucifix to the Shrine, perhaps through some chance it might never reach America but might be broken in transit, whereas I could trust Father Dolan, if I were to give it to him, to transport it safely to its destination. These are the thoughts, Father, that have been running through my mind, which prompted my question, which prompted my request for

Pierre

the pictures of the Shrine and the crowds. I haven't made up my mind yet, Father, to give it to you, or rather to your Shrine because it is very difficult for me to part with my treasure with which I so often declared I would never, never part. I have decided, Father, to ask *notre Mere* (Pauline) whether I have her permission to give it to you. Then I shall go to the tomb and talk long tonight with the Little Flower and let you know my decision in the morning."

You may imagine, my dear friends, with what wonderment I listened to these words of Pierre. I could hardly believe my ears. I hardly dared to hope that he would eventually give me the crucifix, to possess which had been until that evening beyond my wildest dreams, but his words certainly gave me ground for hope.

"What time are you going to say Mass in the morning, Father?" asked Pierre.

"At 6:30 at Buissonnets, in the room of the Little Flower."

"When you return from Mass in the morning, Father, I shall have my decision for you. I shall let you know then definitely if I shall give the crucifix to the shrine. I shall talk long with the Little Flower tonight."

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Gravelfox made from the Little Flower's Rosarium. The Crucifix is now at the National Shrine of the Little Flower in Chicago.
(See text page 140)

Pierre

I could hardly wait until the morning. At six o'clock as I was about to leave my room to go up to the Little Flower's home to say Mass, there came a knock at my door. When I opened the door there was a little servant girl of the inn with an envelope on which was written "To be given immediately to the American Carmelite Father, Father Dolan." Within I found this note from Pierre: "My good Father: I have decided to give you my precious and inestimable treasure which is entirely unique in the world. I am happy to give it to you. Think of me in your holy Mass this morning. Pierre."

I was in the seventh heaven of delight of course to know that we were to have in our Shrine in America the treasure which was exactly what Pierre called it, unique in the world. I needn't tell you how sincerely I thanked Pierre but my delight was not unmixed with regret when I saw the expression of sadness upon the face of Pierre as he helped me arrange the crucifix in a large box to take with me to Paris that afternoon.

"Pierre," I said, "If you are going to be sad and lonely without your treasure, I'd rather leave it here."

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“Father, I’m not sad, or at least if I am, or if I am a little lonesome at first, it is because I am human. But I have given the crucifix because I thought that in America it will redound most to the honor of the Little Flower. She is sure to help me to imitate her and to smile whenever I miss my treasure. I have deliberately preferred to find my happiness rather in giving the crucifix to America than to keep it myself. I assure you that my permanent emotion will not be sadness but gladness that the crucifix is where it is going.*”

That afternoon Pierre accompanied me to the train to help me with my precious package. Although every day at Lisieux had been bright and warm it was cold and raining softly as we left the inn for the station.

“It is too bad, Pierre, that after all the wonderful weather that I have had throughout my stay that the last day should be like this.”

*I have received several letters from Pierre since my return and all of them breathe happiness at the reports that I gave him of the enthusiasm of the crowds over his rose bush. He is particularly happy that his rose bush was at the Shrine during the Eucharistic Congress and seen by so many hundreds of thousands of people and that it is in the hands of the Carmelite Fathers, “her Carmelite brothers,” as he said.

Pierre

“Yes,” said Pierre with a smile giving me the most gracious compliment I have ever received, “Oui, mon pere, vous partez et Lisieux pleure,” “Yes, Father, you are going, and Lisieux is weeping.”

Chapter XI

Visits to Buissonnets, The Home of the Little Flower

Tonight, my dear friends, let us visit the family home of the Little Flower in Lisieux. The Martin property there is called "Les Buissonnets," the meaning of which as nearly as it can be translated, is "The Little Woods," the aptness of which name will become evident later in my talk.

With Pierre I set out one morning from the Carmelite Convent Chapel and traversed the narrow streets past the Church of St. Jaques, then along more stony narrow lanes until suddenly we issued upon a broad boulevard along which the walk was more pleasant. Just before the boulevard reaches the outskirts of the town, Pierre directed that we should turn into a little lane which wound in and out until finally we reached the door or gate in the wall which surrounds the Martin estate. Certainly Mr. Martin could not have chosen for his home a more peaceful spot nor a more secluded one because its situation on

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the edge of the town and the wall around it completely isolated the home.

I pressed the bell, and while waiting for an answer, remembered how often the Little Flower had scampered across the lawn to answer the bell at that same door, for that was one of the duties Pauline had once assigned to the Little Therese.

The door was opened for us by the caretaker, Mademoiselle Violette Castel, who is a sister of one of the Little Flower's novices, Sister Mary of the Trinity. She greeted Pierre enthusiastically and he introduced me, and on account of Pierre's presence I was given unusual liberties. Pierre asked to act as my guide and was told that the freedom of the house and gardens was his.

We entered and I paused inside the gate to drink in the full joy of my first view of the home made so familiar to me from pictures. Nothing could be more gracious and charming than the large, comely, and at once rustic and comfortable house situated in a nest of verdure, with bushes along the sides, the trees of the garden in the rear peeking their heads over the roof of the house. Before the house was a spacious and smiling lawn with trees and little

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garden plots here and there and the whole surrounded by a wall covered with a tapestry of ivy. Surely here was peace, no other noises ever than that of a symphony of crickets or the notes of the nightingales building their nests in the lilac hedges. No wonder that Marie wrote to her cousin when they first moved to Lisieux, "We are finally settled in Buissonnets.* It is a charming home, smiling and gay, with a garden large enough for Celine and Therese to play their games," and no wonder that Mr. Martin called the little lane leading to Buissonnets "the road to Paradise."

Visitors are usually surprised at their first view of the exterior of the home, because it is so modern and recent looking a structure, the perfect type of a well-to-do middle class home. Again one is reminded here of how modern and recent St. Therese is and of the wonder of the story of the

*In her autobiography the Little Flower says of Buissonnets: "Next day they took us to our new home, Les Buissonnets, and there everything proved a fresh source of delight. The trim lawn in front of the house, the garden at the back, the distant view from the large attic windows—all this appealed to my young imagination. Its situation too, was an added charm, for it stood in a quiet part of the town within easy reach of a beautiful park laid out with flowers. This pleasant abode became the scene of many joys, and of family gatherings which I can never forget."

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Little Flower whose home was made a place of pilgrimage before she had been 15 years dead.

Pierre conducted me first to the rooms of the house made interesting and sacred by the presence of the Little Flower. First he showed me the fireplace where the Little Flower used to place her shoes at Christmas time until that Christmas of 1886 which Therese describes as follows: "On reaching home, after midnight Mass, I knew I should find my shoes in the chimney-corner, filled with presents, just as when I was a little child, a fact which proves that I was still treated as a baby. Papa loved to watch my enjoyment and hear my cries of delight as I drew each fresh surprise from the magic shoes, and his pleasure added considerably to mine.

"But the hour had come when Our Lord desired to free me from the failings of my childhood, and take from me even its innocent pleasures. He permitted that Papa, instead of indulging me in his usual way, should feel annoyed, and as I went upstairs I overheard him say: 'All this is far too babyish for a big girl like Therese, and I hope this is the last time it will happen.' These words cut me to the very heart, and

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Celine, knowing how sensitive I was, whispered: 'Don't go down just yet, you would only cry if you looked at your presents before Papa.' But Therese was no longer the same—Jesus had transformed her. Choking back my tears, I ran down to the dining room, and making every effort to still the throbbing of my heart, I picked up my shoes and gaily drew out the presents one by one, looking all the time as happy as a queen. Papa joined in the laughter and there no longer appeared on his face the least sign of vexation."

Next we went to the dining room so often mentioned in the Little Flower's Autobiography and mention in the passage just quoted. The dining room is kept locked and pilgrims view it through a glass window which has been placed in the wall and upon which is written in French this notice: "This dining room and its furniture, round table and chairs are preserved exactly as they were in the life time of the Little Flower. It is here too that on the eve of her departure for the Carmelite Convent St. Therese sat for the last time at the family repast."

Pilgrims have not been allowed for some years to enter the dining room because

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some unscrupulous relic-hunters had begun to cut off bits of the upholstery of the chairs. But Pierre asked Mlle. Violette for the key and we entered. Of course I was overjoyed at this privilege and examined every corner of the room and looked long at all the pictures, and sat in all the chairs and tried Pierre's patience, I am sure, by keeping him waiting so long. I asked him to request for me from Mlle. Violette the privilege of being admitted to the room often during my stay. Pierre obtained the privilege and I often sat in the dining room out of the sight of other pilgrims and read there from the Autobiography of the Little Flower such passages as this: "Monday, April 9, 1888—Feast of the Annunciation was the day chosen for me to enter Carmel. On the eve we all gathered round the table where I was to take my place for the last time, and as if to increase the pain of parting—for farewells are in themselves heart-rending—I heard the tenderest expressions of affection, just when I should have most liked to have been forgotten."

You may imagine how much vividness the Little Flower's words have when read in the very spot she is describing. Later I became great friends with Mlle. Violette,

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who served my Mass many mornings in the Little Flower's room upstairs, and she permitted me to be photographed at the famous round table in the dining room and after Mass on the day of my departure she said with a smile, "Father, I have a surprise in store for you; you may have your coffee this morning on the round table."

This was beyond my wildest dreams and as I breakfasted there, I said to myself, "If only some one of my brother priests could peek in the window and see me now."

Then we went upstairs to visit the room of the Little Flower, the room in which she had been miraculously cured by the smiling vision of the Blessed Virgin! There at first I saw everything in a haze, so powerful was the impression made by the memories called forth at my entrance into that room sanctified over and over again because in it the Little Flower had read, studied, slept, played and prayed. There at night prayers the Little Flower had often knelt beside her beloved father, learning from his countenance how the Saints pray. There Pauline had often put the Little Therese to bed, the little girl at such times invariably asking, "Have I been good to-day? Is God pleased with me? Will the

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Upper—The Author before the Little Flower's "Marvellous"
Shrine at Buissonnets.

Lower—Father Dolan at the famous round table in the dining
room of the Little Flower's home.

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angels watch over me?" and as the Little Flower says: "The answer was always 'Yes,' otherwise I should have spent the whole night in tears. After these questions my sisters kissed me, and little Therese was left alone in the dark."*

When I came out of the daze and was able intelligently to grasp details, I was given one thrill after another. A plate on the door read: "This is the room where the child Therese stricken with a grave malady was favored by the smile of the Queen of Heaven."*¹ The altar in the room, the placard read, marks the exact spot on which once stood the bed on which Therese lay when the vision of Mary came. Near the altar is a replica of the statue of the Blessed Virgin which had become animated and smiled on Mary and on the pedestal of the statue*² is written these words of the Little Flower, describing the miraculous animation of the statue: "La Sainte Verge s'est avancee vers moi et m' a souri"—"The Blessed Virgin advanced toward me and smiled upon me."

*Autobiography, Chapter II

*¹"Chambre ou Therese enfant atteinte d'un grave maladie fut favorisee d'un sourire de la Reine du ciel."

*²The original is now in the Chapel of the tomb of the Little Flower.

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So powerful was the influence that this room of the Little Flower had upon me that I said Mass there far more frequently than I said Mass at her tomb. Mlle. Violette would admit me at 6:30 each morning, serve my Mass, give me a cup of coffee, and then the freedom of the Little Flower's home and gardens was mine two hours before the doors were open to the public. She allowed me to have photographs taken everywhere as the illustrations of my little book will show.

In the corner of the Little Flower's room there is another window cut in the wall through which pilgrims may see the Little Flower's father's bedroom and a placard reads: "The furniture is exactly as it was left at his death and the lamps on the mantle were those that were used for the family repast on the night of the First Holy Communion of the little Saint.*"

From Mlle Violette, Pierre secured the key for this room too and I made the same minute inspection and similar meditations as in the dining room downstairs.

*La chambre du pere de St. Therese avec les memes meubles. Les lampes qui sont sur la cheminee ont servi le soir de la premiere Communion de la petite Sainte pour le repas familial."

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Father Dolan before the Miraculous Statue of Mary in the Room of the Little Flower at Buissonnets.

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Then in another room which had been Pauline's, the toys of the Little Flower are assembled behind glass. There are dolls and checkerboards, picture books, a gold-fish bowl, a bird cage, a hamper for use on her fishing trips with her father, a toy boat called "Abandon," a book of the Sunday epistles and gospels, her skipping rope, her geography, her crucifix, her desk, her chair and her prayer book opened to the "Examination of Conscience," little housekeeping sets of stoves and tables and dishes and finally tiny models of everything used at Mass and Benediction and a tiny altar in which to say the make-believe sacrifice. You may imagine how vivid were the memories of the Little Flower recalled by these toys.

Then we climbed another flight of stairs to the "Belvidere," a large room with great windows all along one side. This was the playroom of the Little Flower on rainy days when she couldn't go into the garden and the place where Mr. Martin assembled his daughters for his daily spiritual lecture. Some of his prayer-like writings in his own hand are framed and hang from the walls of the "Belvidere" and since they illustrate the character of the saintly father, I will

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read free translations of two of these which I copied during one of my many hours in that room: "O Holy Roman Catholic Church, Mother of Churches and of all the faithful, Church chosen by God to unite all his children in innermost bonds of the same charity, may we always from our hearts hold to that Unity."

Another reads: "Most men trouble themselves with many things as if they had still several centuries to live. They are ever seeking the prizes of this world, doing nothing to render themselves immortal. God laughs at such bustle for He knows the moment in which He will choose that all worldly things shall vanish for them. Let us be more wise than the majority of men and place our hope and trust in God who alone is unchanging and Eternity which alone is lasting."

Then we went out of the door at the rear of the house into the pretty garden and strolled about the paths where the Little Flower and her sisters, particularly Celine, so often ran and played. There in the garden is a magnificent group of statuary marking the spot where Therese asked her father's permission to enter Carmel. The statuary represents Therese in the act of

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making her request. The group is artistic in the extreme; Pierre said that for a long time he could not look at it without tears, for on the Little Flower's face there is an expression of anxiety and eagerness that her request be granted and at the same time there is written on her countenance pity and pain for the very human sorrow she knew her "King" was feeling at the prospect of permanent separation from her, his "little Queen." On Mr. Martin's face there is the natural agony which would be felt by a father who had lost his wife and three of whose daughters had already left him for the convent and who now is asked to consent to part with his favorite whom he so adored. But the father's eyes are raised toward Heaven to gather strength for the sacrifice which he knew well God was asking from him and there is therefore in his eyes, predominating over the pain, resignation and even gratitude that God should honor him by asking the loan of all his daughters.

The group in white marble is indeed a masterpiece and many a time I tried, as I looked at it, to reconstruct in imagination the actual scene it depicts. The request was made on Pentecost Sunday after Ther-

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ese and her father had returned from vespers. The sun was just setting and Therese and her father were walking arm and arm along the paths of the garden, as the birds in the trees all about them sang, like an evening prayer, their adieu to the dying day. The noble countenance of Mr. Martin beamed with the serenity of his saintly thoughts. Gently, her eyes swimming with tears, Therese without speaking led him to a little garden seat.

He looked at her with touching tenderness and then drawing her close to him he said: "What's the trouble, my little queen, tell me; confide to me your trouble."

Between her tears, Therese sobbed her secret—she felt herself called to Carmel and she wished to go soon, very soon.

The first blow was a cruel one for the poor father. Must he then live henceforth in a desert, in an empty house, he himself abandoned in his old age to the care of hired servants? Like his Saviour on the eve of His Sacrifice, the father felt his heart break with grief and he would weep. But that grief was but of an instant, a tribute to weak human nature. An instant more and the grand Christian recovered. He asked her reasons, her motives, holding her

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Father Dolan in the Garden of the Little Flower's home beside the statuary representing Therese asking her father's permission to enter Carmel.

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the while closely in his embrace. Now more sure of herself, Therese explained, and then the father, satisfied that her decision was well founded, plucked a white flower from the lawn and gave it to his child telling her that the tiny white flower was the symbol of the virginal purity which she wished to consecrate to God and for which consecration she had his consent. The heart of the father and of the daughter were henceforth fused, united in aspiration for the same ideal and Mr. Martin was henceforth active, in clearing away the obstacles in the way of his little queen's entrance to Carmel.*

Not the least interesting of all the souvenirs of St. Therese at Buissonnets is the little grotto of the Little Flower in a niche in the wall in the garden. There is preserved (reconstructed by her sisters) one of the altars that the little girl erected and called "Marvellous" in reporting her achievement to her father. "Everything about the Shrine is authentic," reads an inscription on the wall, "the statue of the Blessed Virgin and of St. Joseph are the

*Mr. Martin made several journeys to arrange audiences with the bishop of the diocese for Therese, so that she might present her plea, sponsored by her father, for entrance into the convent before the canonical age.

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same ones once placed in the grotto by the Little Flower herself."

Thanks to the kindness of Mlle. Violette, many an afternoon after the doors had been closed to pilgrims, I strolled about the garden alone or lolled on the lawn luxuriating in the memories that the sacred place called forth. At one time I could almost hear in fancy the patter of the footsteps of the Little Flower as she ran up the gravel path, after completing her shrine, to call her father or Pauline to see her "marvellous altar." At other times I would take out my copy of the Autobiography and read my favorite passages in the very places to which those passages had reference. For instance, if the passage concerned the Little Flower's First Communion Feast or the evening games of the family, I would go to the dining room; if it told of the Smile of the Blessed Virgin I would mount to the Little Flower's room, or if of her vocation I would go to the garden to read the passage before the marble group.

All this was for me, as indeed it would be for anyone, an unending joy and when the time came to leave, departure was difficult. After Mass and breakfast at the Round Table, I bade farewell to Mlle. Violette and

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started down the path to the gate. I paused once to look around once more at the place I so loved and again I continued on my way; once again I turned to get a last look at the hallowed home. I reached the door and opened it and I could not but turn to look again and this time Mlle. Violette, who understood the faltering, called out, "Never mind, Father, you'll be back again some time soon." I waved and said to myself, "Yes, God willing," and then I walked with a heavy heart down the lane, which was not for me that day "the road **to** Paradise."

Chapter XII

Visits at Alencon, the Birthplace of the Little Flower

A tedious journey by train which contrasted sharply with the beautiful ride from Paris to Lisieux brought me to Alencon one day from Paris. I sought out immediately the Martin home in which the Little Flower was born.* It was easily found on one of the main streets, No. 42 Rue Saint-Blaise. The house, though neat and cozy was most simple and plain, not at all as large or imposing as the Little Flower's home at Lisieux. The Alencon house has no front lawn or garden surrounding it; it sets immediately upon the street and one steps from the sidewalk into the front parlor.

I rang the bell and it was answered by the caretaker, the famous Mrs. Grant. Mrs. Grant is the wife of one of the Little Flower's first and most noted converts, the Rev.

*Since the Little Flower's family moved from Alencon to Lisieux when the Little Flower was only three years old, Alencon is not of course as well known to those interested in the Little Flower as Lisieux.

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Upper—The National Director of the Society of the Little Flower before the Little Flower's home at Lisieux.
Lower—Father Dolan at the entrance to the Little Flower's home with Mlle. Violet Castel, the kindly custodian of the home.

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Mr. Grant, who before his conversion was a United Free Church minister of Lochranza in Arran in Scotland. The story of his conversion by the intercession of the Little Flower is a very beautiful one and may be read in the Autobiography. When the Grants after their conversion were driven out of their native town in Scotland, they came to Lisieux on a pilgrimage and just at the time of their arrival Pauline, the Little Flower's sister, was looking for some couple to act as guardians of the Little Flower's birthplace in Alencon. The Grants received the commission and always attributed to the intercession of the Little Flower their position in her home where they were so happy and contented.*

Mrs. Grant answered the bell, and it was of course for me a delightful meeting. From my boyhood I had read of her as one of the Little Flower's earliest converts and my meeting with her brought me, it seemed, very near to the Little Flower herself, for her conversion took place only about thirteen years after the Little Flower's death.

She is a delightful, little old lady with grey hair and a pleasant, smiling counte-

*Mr. Grant died in the house privileged to be the birthplace of the Little Flower in July, 1917.

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nance. I have met many people whose affection for the Little Flower was most edifying, but excepting Pierre, I have never met anyone who seemed to radiate quite so much love for the Little Flower as Mrs. Grant. She didn't say how much she loved our little saint, but I didn't have to be told—her eyes when speaking of the Little Flower, the tone of her voice when discussing her, told me the degree of her affection. Trust too, without bounds, has Mrs. Grant in St. Therese. For instance, she told me that she has a strong hope that the Little Flower will convert the entire village in which she and her husband formerly lived. "Because," she said, "when I last visited Lochranza where we had been driven out upon announcing our conversion and where on a former visit I was greeted with jibes and jeers, I was treated with courtesy and respect and even kindness. So will you join me, Father, and have the members of the Little Flower Society in America join me in praying to the Little Flower for the conversion of my town and of my country."

I would have liked to talk indefinitely with Mrs. Grant. She was so refreshing, so edifying in her manner, in her speech, in her appearance, that it was not difficult to

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guess that this little old lady who thanks the Little Flower in every breath she draws for the privileges of being the guardian of the Little Flower's birthplace, is indeed very close to the Little Flower and has absorbed much of the Little Flower's own gentleness, amiability and spirituality. Indeed, I think, my dear friends, that the reason why these Little Flower devotions every Tuesday attract such throngs is that the Little Flower devotees feel that they are better in every way for their brief contact at the Shrine every Tuesday with all that concerns the Little Flower. Familiarity with her, constant devotion to her, frequent visits to her shrine and relics will serve to do for us in some degree what similar intimacy has done for Mrs. Grant.

Mrs. Grant took me first, of course, to the little Chapel into which the tiny room in which the Little Flower was born has been converted. The room in which the Little Flower was born! What thoughts crowded into my mind as after our prayers we stood there in the little Chapel room and read the inscription: "In this room, January 2nd, 1873, Therese Martin, now St. Therese of the Child Jesus, was born." How much or how little did the Little

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Flower's mother guess that night of the future of that little new-born girl? You probably know that when, two days after birth, the Little Flower was brought back from the baptismal font of the Church to that room, the Little Flower's mother in nursing her child thought she discerned a halo radiating divinely from the little one's forehead, and once too the father in singing to the little one a few days after her birth thought for a moment that he heard the little one also feebly sing. Whether or not she did so sing, the presage would be verified, for that soul that had just made its appearance into the Martin home became indeed one of the world's sweetest singers, singing God's mercy and goodness so sweetly that all the world has paused to listen.*

I tried as I stood there in that room to imagine the expression on the Little Flower's father's countenance as he bent over the baby in that room to learn if he had really been mistaken in fancying that he heard the little one softly singing. I conjectured that he would on that occasion

*"I will sing, I will always sing even if I must gather my roses in the very midst of thorns and the longer and sharper the thorns the sweeter shall be my song." Autobiography of the Little Flower.

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Altar in the room in which the Little Flower was born and in which her Mother died.

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have offered up a prayer to God to make his little child a saint. I thought while I was standing there too, of much that I had so recently heard of the Little Flower's saintly mother who never ruled the household at Lisieux, but who died in the same room in which I was standing, the room in which the Little Flower was born. On another occasion I will tell you of the many anecdotes of the Little Flower's mother that I heard from authentic sources while I was in France and which because they throw so much new light on the saint's mother will not only be interesting but extremely beneficial especially to mothers, of whom thousands in America are trying to fashion their households as much as possible after the Little Flower's family home as their model.

Leaving the chapel I stood at the head of the stairs with Mrs. Grant and said to her, "Is this the staircase which the Little Flower used to mount calling out at each step 'Mama, Mama' and refusing to mount until she heard the mother's 'Yes, darling' in answer?"

"Yes, Father, indeed it is the very same," replied Mrs. Grant. "I often think of that incident as I mount these stairs," and then

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she added, "The staircase has never been altered nor touched."

"What a patient and model mother Mrs. Martin must have been," I said.

"Oh, yes, Father, I often think that someone should write a book about the Little Flower's mother. What a wonderful amount of good it would do if all mothers could know intimately the mother of the Little Flower."

"I had already half determined to write such a book," I said, "and now I have decided. If you will agree to pray that it will do the good that you have just prophesied for it, I will write the book and call it simply 'The Little Flower's Mother.'"

Mrs. Grant agreed and the book will soon be forthcoming.

Mrs. Grant and I talked further then about the Little Flower's mother and before I left the house that first day I went back to the Chapel to say another little prayer to St. Therese and another prayer this time not **for**, but **to** the Little Flower's mother who most certainly is in heaven and who probably had not a little to do by her prayers and sacrifices with the Little Flower's climb or rather flight to the heights of holiness. I shall develop that

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thought more at length in the promised book, "The Little Flower's Mother."*

I asked Mrs. Grant's permission to say Mass in the morning in the Chapel of the room in which the Little Flower was born and in which her mother died. Permission was readily granted, but Mrs. Grant asked me to make the hour as late as possible, "for," she said, "there is a dear old lady a Madam Tifenne who is Leonie's godmother and a very intimate friend of the Little Flower's family who loves to hear Mass in that little Chapel upstairs and she cannot come early because she is past eighty now and has to walk a considerable distance. She would love to attend your Mass because we have so few American priests who come here and Madam Tifenne loves to come here especially when the Masses are said by priests who come all the way from America to honor the little girl she knew so well."

"You say she is an intimate friend of the Little Flower's family and knew the Little Flower?" I asked.

*The saintly lady who was the mother of the Little Flower is too little known, because since the purpose of the Autobiography is to give the life of St. Therese, that book gives little of the information we have concerning the life of the saint's mother.

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“Yes, Father, and once the Little Flower slept in her home. She treats that bedroom, which the Little Flower used, like a Chapel.”

“Well, I’ll be delighted to say Mass as late as is necessary to accommodate Madam Tifenne,” I said, “But I must make one condition, Mrs. Grant, namely, that you tell me her address and allow me to go to her and to say that you sent me and to ask her at what hour she wishes the Mass said. That, you know, will give me another opportunity of speaking to one who had known the Little Flower and that is one reason why I come to Alencon, to collect all the first-hand information I could concerning the Little Flower.”

Mrs. Grant smilingly gave the address and I went speedily off to see Madam Tifenne, but before I left Mrs. Grant posed with me for her picture at the door of the Little Flower’s home.*

I immediately sought out Madam Tifenne’s address, No. 4 Place de Plenitre. The maid who answered the bell answered that Madam Tifenne was not in but that

*The priest at the left of Father Dolan is a French priest who accompanied Father Dolan from Paris to Alencon.

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The altar shown marks the spot in which once stood the bed of the Little Flower in which she was cured by the miraculous smile of the Blessed Virgin.

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she expected her at any moment. The words were scarcely out of her mouth when she saw Madam Tifenne just turning the corner towards her home. She walked so spryly that I could hardly believe that it was the same lady of whom Mrs. Grant had spoken, for Mrs. Grant had said, you remember, that Madam Tifenne was over eighty years old. She came up quickly, a little short, agile, bright eyed, red cheeked Normandy lady, and she was all courtesy and kindness when I announced that I had come from Mrs. Grant to say that I would say Mass in the Little Flower's little room in the morning at any hour which would be convenient for her.

The hour was settled and I asked to see the room in which the Little Flower had slept. She conducted me upstairs and proudly pointed to the room, kneeling as she entered to say a little prayer, and of course I did the same. After our prayer, I asked Madam Tifenne under what circumstances the Little Flower had occupied that room.

"Just before she entered the convent," she replied, "the Little Flower came to Alencon to bid goodbye to the Alencon friends and relatives of the family. I, as the god-

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mother of Leonie and intimate friend of the family, had the honor of entertaining Therese and her father and this was the room which Therese occupied, and of course," Madame explained, "I allow no one now to occupy this room."

The room was small and simply furnished, and over the bed, which stands in the corner, hangs a picture of the Little Flower and beneath the picture there is a little stand on which a vigil light burns and where fresh flowers are always kept.

Madam then conducted me to the parlor where we sat and talked for an hour about the Little Flower whom Madam Tifenne always called, not St. Therese or the Little Flower, but, with simple familiarity, "Therese." She explained too that she was never able to call the other sisters of the Little Flower by their religious names but referred to them always as "Pauline," "Celine," "Marie" and "Leonie" and she added once when she had apologized for that habit, Pauline said to her, "Who has a better right to refer to us by our family names? You are one of the family."

"Madam," I said, "are the pictures of the Little Flower faithful likenesses of her as you knew her?"

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"No," she declared, "they flatter her."

"Do you mean that the Little Flower was not beautiful?" I asked.

"No," she said, "I do not think that I would call her beautiful; not more beautiful than hundreds of other girls one sees, at least as regards her features. But there was a most unusual, arresting and charming expression on her countenance, an expression of placidity which we always remarked from her earliest childhood, and her eyes—her eyes were very beautiful, large and mystic, as it were. By mystic, I mean that her eyes always seemed to be looking into the next world. I remember that often while we had company Therese would be sitting in this very parlor as a little girl seemingly attentive, but if one looked into her eyes one would see that her thoughts were far away."

"I do not understand, Madam," I said, "how you can maintain that the pictures of the Little Flower flatter her, because her sister Celine is the artist who painted the pictures of the Little Flower that are in general circulation."

"Well, Celine," declared Madam Tifenne, "idealized her then; she idealized her."

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“Well, did you ever see a picture of the Little Flower that you thought was a faithful likeness, Madam?” I asked.

“Yes,” she said, “there is one. It is the face on the marble statue of the Little Flower that has been erected over her tomb in the cemetery at Lisieux. That is a faithful likeness and if you wish to know how much I like that statue ask Mrs. Grant.”

The next morning I did ask Mrs. Grant and she told me first that she herself could never understand the emphatic declarations of Madam Tifenne that the pictures of the Little Flower flattered her, “because,” said Mrs. Grant, “Celine was the author of those pictures and her sister, Celine, if anyone, ought to know the appearance of the Little Flower, especially since the Little Flower declared before her death she would be nearer to Celine in death than she was in life.* But,” continued Mrs. Grant, “the enthusiasm of Madam Tifenne for the statue of the Little Flower in the cemetery

*In 1915 an Ecclesiastical tribunal appointed by the Bishop of Lisieux after a most minute examination of the different photographs of the Little Flower that had been preserved in the archives of the Carmelite convent at Lisieux, formulated this conclusion about the exactitude of the portraits of the saint: “The oval portrait or bust of the saint, (placed by the way as a frontispiece to this book) is a most conscientious and careful likeness to the different photographs of St. Therese that are extant.”

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was certainly pathetic. When she saw it for the first time she was with me. We were walking down the gravel road of the cemetery and had just turned the corner toward the Little Flower's tomb when Madam Tifenne caught sight of the new statue and exclaimed, "Oh, c'est elle! c'est elle! It is she! It is she!" and the tears ran down her cheeks as approaching nearer she continued to cry 'c'est elle! c'est elle!'"

I then asked Madam Tifenne, "Did you ever think for a moment, when you knew the Little Flower as a girl, that she would ever become a saint?"

"Oh, no," she laughed, "I never dreamt that Therese would become a saint. I looked upon her merely as an unusually good little girl. I was not surprised at her goodness because both her mother and her father were saints—saints," she repeated. "C'était une famille vraiment patriarchale," she declared, that is, "It was a truly patriarchal family." She paused before the adjective, "Patriarchal," which was the best word that she could find in her vocabulary to characterize her admiration for the goodness of the Martin family.

Madam Tifenne then described at some length the Little Flower's father and

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mother. What she told me of her mother will be reserved for another occasion. She said that the holiness of the Little Flower's father was generally recognized by the common people of Alencon. So widespread was this recognition that there was in general circulation throughout the town a play on words which had reference to his goodness. "It seems," she said, "that every one knew that the sole passion of Mr. Martin was to fish. He loved to fish and the word in French for fisherman 'pecheur' also means 'sinner,' so that often we would say of Mr. Martin: 'Saint Martin; Martin pecheur' (that is 'Saint Martin, Martin, the sinner' or if you choose, 'Martin, the fisherman.')

Madam Tifenne talked on and I hung on her every word. The greatest thrill of the interview came when she told me that she, the lady talking to me, had been present at the first Communion of the Little Flower and was present also at the first Communion feast at the Martin home in the evening. The Little Flower gives a whole chapter in the Autobiography to her First Communion and many pages to her First Holy Communion day. You can imagine therefore the thrill of sitting there listen-

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In the upper picture Father Dolan is examining the toys of the Little Flower and in the background is the bed of her childhood.

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ing to one who had been actually present at the scene which the Little Flower describes in part as follows: "At last there dawned the most beautiful day of all the days of my life, of which I remember even the smallest detail of those sacred hours, the joyful awakening, the reverent and tender embraces of my mistresses and older companions, the room filled with snow-white frocks where each child was dressed in turn. . . . How sweet was the first embrace of Jesus! It was indeed an embrace of love. I felt that I was loved and I said 'I love Thee and I give myself to Thee forever.' Jesus asked nothing of me and claimed no sacrifice. For a long time He and little Therese had known and understood one another. That day our meeting was more than simple recognition. It was perfect union. We were no longer two. . . . How could our darling mother's absence grieve me when Heaven itself dwelt in my soul? In receiving the visit of Jesus I received one from her as well. . . . I was not indifferent to the feast prepared at home and I was charmed with the watch presented to me by Papa, but my joy was a tranquil joy. No exterior thing could interfere with the inward peace of my soul."

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Madam Tifenne then went on and reconstructed for me all those scenes of that first Holy Communion day. She described for instance the tranquil joy of the little girl, evident to all and edifying all; she described the Little Flower's enthusiasm when her father presented the watch which was his first Communion gift to her. But Madam Tifenne's description, thrilling as it was to hear, could not equal the Little Flower's description of her own spiritual joy of that day, descriptions which I have read and re-read many times since with more enjoyment, I think, because, I had interviewed one who had been present on that occasion.

The next morning I had the happiness of giving Holy Communion at my Mass to this intimate friend of the Martin family and after the Mass Mrs. Grant and Madam Tifenne posed for me in the tiny garden of the Little Flower which is preserved in the rear of the Martin home at Alencon.

After a visit to the Church of Notre Dame in which the Little Flower was baptized,* I left Alencon well content with my visit but regretting that I had no time to have further conversation with the delightful ladies, Madam Tifenne and Mrs. Grant.

*The baptistry and font at which the Little Flower was baptized are preserved just as they were at the time of the Saint's baptism except that there has been erected in the baptistry a magnificent altar surmounted by a beautiful statue of the Little Flower.

Chapter XIII

The National Shrine of the Little Flower

We have been talking for nine days of the Little Flower's sisters and relatives. What would they say or think if they could see our Shrine today? * The Little Flower's sisters would feel as we do if they were here today. Our feeling is one of exultation because it is a great triumph for our little Saint, a triumph because there has been completed today so superb, so magnificent a monument to her in this metropolis of distant America. The Little Flower's cousin or her sisters, if present, would indeed be as proud of our Shrine today as we are and would share our feelings of exultation.

But, my dear friends, I should not say "our shrine." It is yours. Although it was of course, very costly, it was built by you, by those hundreds of you who have given donations large and small in thanksgiving for favors received from the

*This talk was given on the day on which the National Shrine was completed. [Editor's Note.]

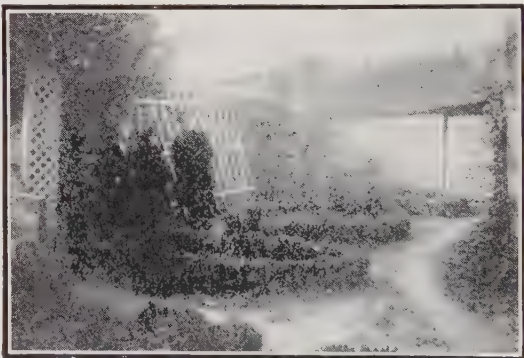
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Little Flower. That is the first remarkable feature of the Little Flower Shrine: it is a monument to the power of the Little Flower's intercession because every dollar of its cost represents someone's thanksgiving offering to the Little Flower.

The Shrine itself is built according to the traditional principle of shrines of saints in Europe around a painting of the Saint in glory as its central or focal point. The chandeliers are not merely chandeliers but each is really a rose bush to symbolize her promise to let fall from heaven a shower of roses, and to emphasize the chief lesson she teaches, namely, love of God, the rose being for her queen of the flowers because it symbolizes the queen of the virtues, love, love of God. The hanging rose-bushes or baskets are themselves shaped like roses. They are made of gold-plated bronze and a close view will reveal that the bronze work is all foliage, rose leaves done so delicately that one of America's most noted architects declared upon viewing the Shrine, "I have never seen such magnificent bronze work. It is superb."

The outer golden bronze rose bushes, which are filled with white roses of crystal, form, you will notice, an arch which serves

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Upper—Mrs. Grant and Father Dolan at the entrance to the Little Flower's birthplace.

Lower—Left to right—Mrs. Grant, Madame Tifenne and Father Dolan in the Garden of the Little Flower's birthplace.

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as an outer border to the shrine. The inner arch leads up from within the two side arches of the altar itself to culminate in the large centerpiece or glory made of golden bronze rays to symbolize light and heat, the light of inspiration and the heat of love sent forth to the world by the Little Flower.

The Little Flower herself is painted in the centerpiece in glory, in the ecstasy of her vision of God in Heaven. So you see, my dear friends, we have above the altar the painting of the Little Flower represented as she is in Heaven and below in the central arch of the altar we have the statue of the Little Flower represented as she was on earth and if there is any more beautiful statue of the Little Flower in Europe than the one in that arch today, it could not be located by the artists whom we induced to search with us. We looked at every model of Little Flower statue in Alencon, in Lisieux, and in Paris and at Lisieux itself we found this statue of the Little Flower made after the model approved by her sisters and made under the supervision of the most skilled artists that we could find in France. I think you will all agree that the face of the statue is the most pleasing, the most winsome and the most like our ideal of the

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Little Flower than the faces of all the different statues we have had at various times at our Shrine.

On the altar itself, supported by two angels, is the chasse or golden container for the five major relics of the Little Flower. The reliquary is in the form of a golden rose branch, each rose of which contains one of the relics. The whole constitutes the largest collection of relics in the world except those at her tomb. Two of the relics, a portion of her flesh and several generous locks of her hair, were given by her own sister, Pauline. The other three are portions of her ashes, of her bones and of the habit in which she died and was buried.

The entire shrine, counting the roses in the bronze vases in the arches, contains 578 electric roses and the beauty of this ensemble when illuminated you all feel and I need not therefore describe.

The bronze and electric work of the Shrine, the vases, the candelabra and the reliquary were executed by the oldest and most famous firm in Europe, the house of Poussiellgue. Mssr. Poussiellgue and his sons constitute the fourth generation who have managed this firm which has been occupied exclusively for more than a century

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in furnishing shrines and the like for the most celebrated churches in Paris and Rome and other cities in Europe. There is a tradition in the family of Poussiellgue handed down by the grandfather and great grandfather of the present owner that men occupied in work such as the making of shrines and reliquaries, should not only be capable artists but religious men, men of piety and prayer. And I found that all the members of this firm are indeed of the very finest and highest type of French Catholic gentlemen and, by the way, all of them are lovers of the Little Flower. No one of us could have put into that work a more religious zeal for the Little Flower's glory than these men did, and no one in the world could have brought to this work more skill. They had to work nights to complete the Shrine before the time I was scheduled to leave Europe and the work being completed at eleven o'clock one night they set up the shrine in the studio and at that late hour assembled their families, grown-ups and children, and then they turned on the electricity and it was a joy to see the faces of the workmen and the artists as they listened to the delighted comments of their families upon the Little Flower's shrine

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upon which they worked so hard, and which they considered their masterpiece, a masterpiece which was not to be exhibited in France as their other masterpieces are, but to be packed up in the morning and shipped to distant America.

It will interest you too, I am sure, to know something of the artist who painted the shrine picture of the Little Flower in glory. I had told the elder Mssr. Poussiellgue that to paint a shrine picture I wanted not only an artist of reputation but an artist of religious mind and heart, someone who would put into the picture not only artistic ability but religious feeling.

Mssr. Poussiellgue said, "I know your man," and he took me to one Joseph Gerard. We found him a tall, ascetic looking, middle aged man in his garden studio in a quiet, secluded corner of Paris.

Mssr. Poussiellgue said in introducing me to the artist, "Mssr. Gerard has been decorated by the French Academy, has been awarded the Legion of Honor for distinguished bravery in the great War and is also the president of the Holy Name Society of Paris."

The artist was much embarrassed by this summary of his fame but he became very

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enthusiastic when our errand was explained. He said, "I will be delighted to paint the picture of the Little Flower, my favorite saint."

He pointed to a table in the studio where there were many books and on the top of the pile was the *Life of the Little Flower*. He walked to the door of his studio, pointed to a window of a convent which adjoined his garden and there in the chapel of the convent, visible from the door of the studio and overlooking his garden was a statue of the Little Flower. "You see I am surrounded by her," he said.

He began a novena to the Little Flower on the morning that he started to work on his picture and the result is the work of piety and art which you see, a work produced by one who is at once a brave soldier, a great artist, a thorough Catholic gentleman and lover of the Little Flower.

That, my dear friends, is, in brief, the history of our Shrine and its builders.

You know how men feel when homes they have planned have been completed. That is not our feeling nor your feeling to-day. It is not a feeling of proprietorship, not a feeling of personal pride, but a consciousness of privilege that the Little

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Left to right: Mssrs. Ponsielgne, the builder of the new National Shrine, Father Dolan and Mssr. Gerard, the artist who painted the Little Flower in Glory for the National Shrine.

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Flower should have chosen this church, our church, your church, as the seat of her most beautiful shrine in America. It is certainly that and we can say also, making all allowance for an inclination to be partial to ourselves, that no shrine to her in Europe can equal it, except the Lisieux chapel and even that does not surpass it.

There then, my dear friends is our monument to the little girl nun of Normandy who is dead only twenty-nine years but who in that short time has already brought the world to her feet, captured the hearts and captivated the affections of millions of men and women of every race and age and condition of life; there is our monument to the little girl nun who has so won the hearts of the members of her society here in America, so showered her roses upon them that they have, in thanksgiving erected this beautiful shrine to her, their benefactor. That she will continue her benefactions, continue to shower her roses from this, her central American shrine, there can be no doubt. That we will continue to labor for her, labor to imitate her, labor to spread her devotion there is no doubt either. It will be easier now to work for her, easier to imitate her, easier to imitate the virtues

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that attract all to her and that make her the queen of millions of hearts; easier to do all this now that we have her enshrined in a bower worthy of her, in a rose bower worthy of a queen, in a rose bower worthy of our little Queen of the Roses who has done and will do so much for us all.



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